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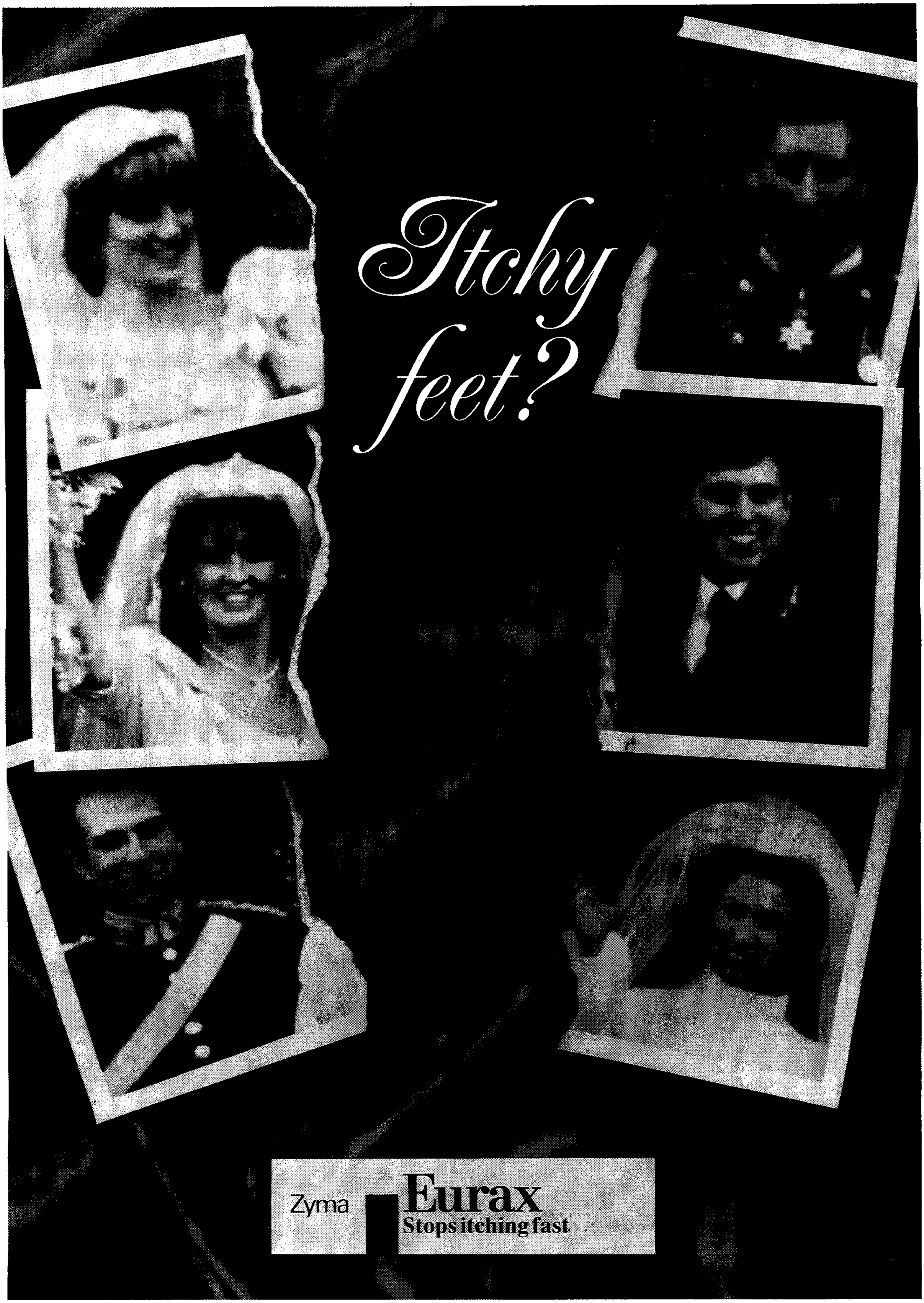

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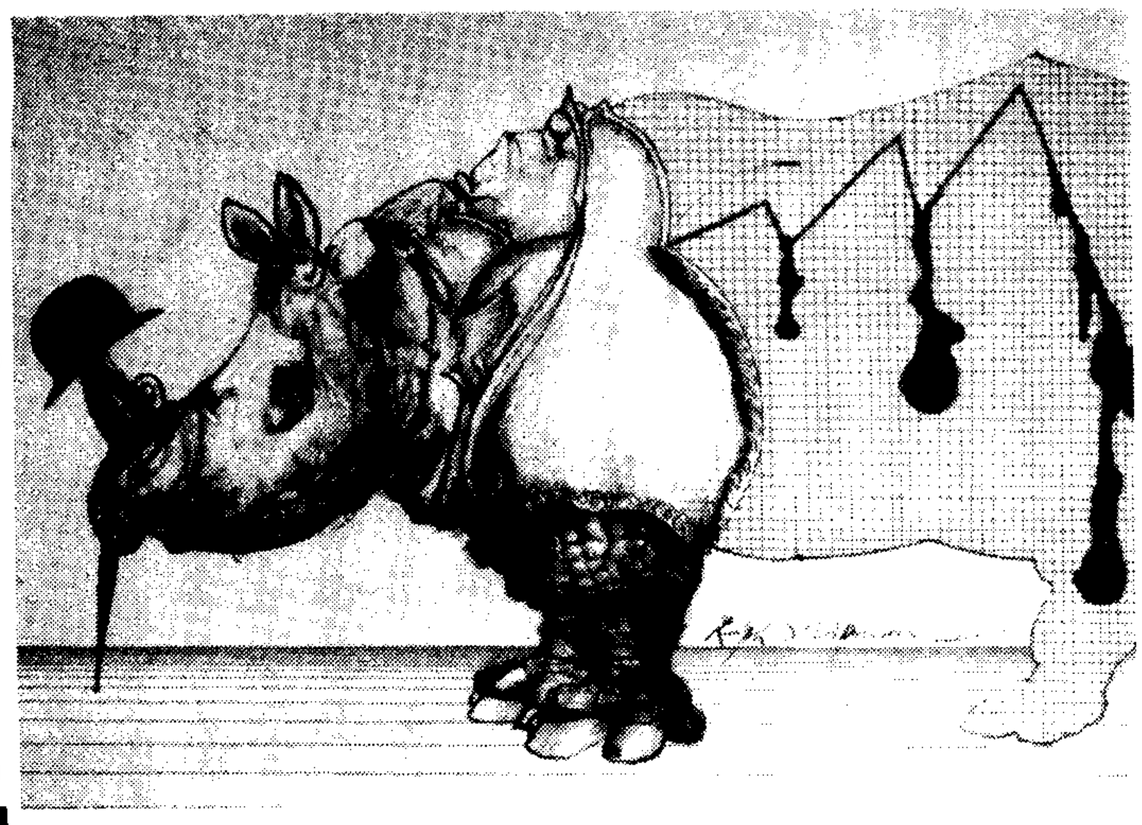

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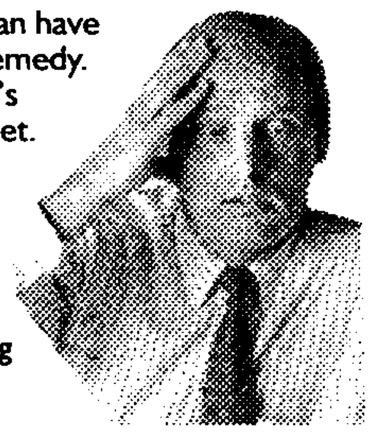

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MY BID to acquire a modest 99% stake in the *Independent* newspaper has been sadly misinterpreted by ill-informed commentators in the media. These malcontents have tried to whip up anti-Gnome sentiment amongst the shareholders and employees of the paper, frightening them with ludicrous tales about me.

Their attempts to paint me as some sort of malevolent Press Baron could not be more hurtful nor more unjust.

For the record, let me state unequivocally that the *Independent* under me would have:

- Editorial Freedom
- No Proprietorial Interference
- No Political Bias
- Independence.

I have always believed in these virtues as the necessary basis of integrity for any newspaper publishing venture. And I promise to stick by them when the *Independent* becomes part of the Gnome Group of titles.

Rest assured that the Editor will be free to publish whatever I like, that there will be no interference with the wishes of the proprietor, the paper will have no political bias (supporting only the government) and that the *Independent* will be independent of any control from those who work or write there.

Thank you.

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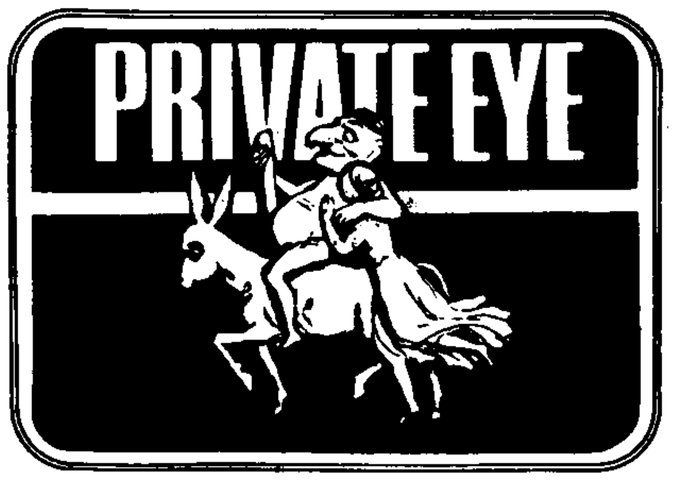


COLOUR SECTION

"GO TO A number of other countries and you would win contracts because your cousin was a minister" — the ringing words of treasury chief secretary Michael Portillo to students at Southampton university have been misinterpreted.

What he plainly meant was that in a number of other countries you can win contracts because your cousin is a minister; but in Britain your firm is more likely to win a contract if your mother is a prime minister.

Mark Thatcher was set on the road to fame and fortune in the early 1980s by Cementation, a subsidiary of Trafalgar House who took him on, despite his total lack of qualifications, as a £50,000 "consultant". One place Mark "consulted" on Cementation's behalf was the Sultanate of Oman, where his mother, the prime minister, was batting for Britain and secured a huge contract for British companies, including Cementation.

The prolonged government patronage of Trafalgar House (Cleveland Bridge, Dartford Tunnel etc, etc,) has been set out in detail in the *Eye* over the years, but nowhere did the company do better than in Malaysia where, once again batting for Britain, Margaret Thatcher secured the contract for British companies to build the wasteful Pergau Dam.

The lucky companies included Cementation and Balfour Beatty. The companies which benefited most from the Malaysian deals, however, were the arms firms which supplied the government of Malaysia with a whole new military base, with the aircraft and the ammunition to stock it. The luckiest companies here were two other Thatcher favourites: GEC and British Aerospace.

The arms deal, worth about $5 billion, was brokered by the Midland Bank arms export department and its ubiquitous consultant, Stephan Kock. Even more central to the deal, however, was Kock's friend and business colleague, Richard Unwin, the board of whose company, Richard Unwin International, was graced by two Tory MPs (Anthony Kershaw and Gerald Howarth) and two retired admirals.

Unwin's contacts were spread far and wide. His Pyrotechnics subsidiary, for instance, organised a fireworks display to celebrate the birthday of the King of Jordan. Unwin was also close to Martin Laing, chairman of John Laing, and Dick Evans the "great survivor" at British Aerospace. Unwin was the mastermind behind many of the deals whereby (in Alan Clark's famous phrase) the "trickier items" of arms for Iraq were dispatched from Britain via Jordan. Unwin also knew and attended arms fairs with Denis and Mark Thatcher.

Portillo's perceptive speech at Southampton referred to "lining the pockets" of public officials abroad in order to win contracts. Nowhere was this more true than in the two biggest arms deals ever batted for Britain: the Al Yamamah deal, negotiated by Mrs Thatcher with the Saudi government and signed in 1985 and 1987; and the Malaysian deal negotiated by Thatcher and signed in 1988.

The size of commissions in Al Yamamah can be estimated from the allegation that a British Tornado jet, which can be snapped up by the RAF for £20 million, retailed to the Saudis at £35 million. The difference, it is said, covered "commissions".

An estimate of the size of the commissions was made in the national audit office (NAO) report on Al Yamamah, commissioned in 1989, written by 1992 but never published for fear that British jobs would be lost when the awful expense of the kickbacks emerged.

The author of the report, Sir John Bourn, comptroller and auditor general, was a senior official at the ministry of defence when Al Yamamah was signed. He kept up his interest in arms matters even after he became auditor general in 1988. In the summer of that year he visited the Grantham works of an expanding British arms company, BMARC, a director of which was, at the time, Jonathan Aitken, now minister of state for defence procurement.

Sir John Bourn told the *Independent* last week that "the national audit office did not have the power to follow public money once it had been paid to private contractors". Thus, if the "commissions" are paid by private contractors, they are out of the reach of the government auditor — even in the case of contracts like Al Yamamah and Malaysia, negotiated by British ministers on behalf of the government.

A clue to the size of the commissions in both contracts can be had from another deal negotiated by a Richard Unwin company. The deal was exposed in last year's report by the department of trade and industry on the collapse of the ASTRA arms company, parent of BMARC.

In 1985, Unwin Pyrotechnic Ltd signed a £729,305 contract for the supply of mortar fire simulators to the Nigerian ministry of defence. The cost of producing and exporting the simulators was £66,305. The profit to the firm was £313,000 — and the commissions paid were £350,000. Even Mr Portillo might be surprised at such figures.

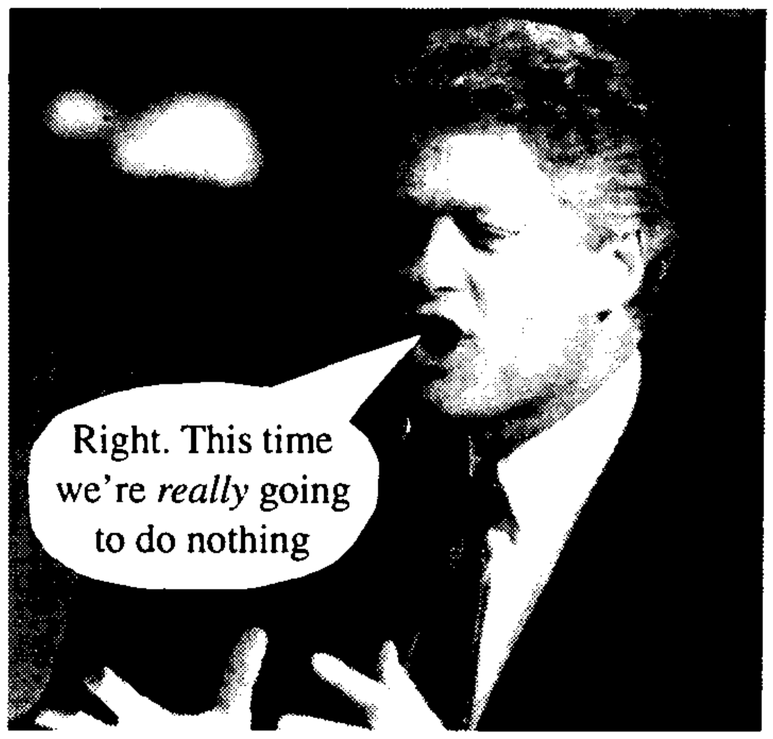
WATCHING the UN security council after it conceded there were Croatian government troops in Bosnia brought tears to the eyes of nostalgic UN watchers.

The presence of Iraqi troops in Kuwait sparked a council meeting at 1am, followed by an immediate resolution. It took a week of badgering for the council even to meet on the Croat issue, and then it issued a mealy-mouthed statement asking the Croatians to withdraw, please, or action would follow.

While the Croats have few consequences to fear from their re-run of the *Blitzkrieg* tactics of their erstwhile German allies, what will happen to the Serbs after their market square massacre? UN air strikes, perhaps?

Six months after the Bosnian no-fly zone was implemented, the only aeroplanes in the air have been the ones making the estimated 1,279 unauthorized overflights — all completely unhindered by the expensive NATO weaponry on patrol down below.

SARAJEVO ATROCITY



Street of Shame

DEMORALISED hacks at the *Indescribablyboring* have been invited by their leader, ex-saintly Andreas Whittam Strobes, to "take part in an exceptional consultation exercise". He has set up a number of working groups which will suggest to him "where, how and why the paper needs to be improved".

Strobes's own contribution to the debate is a memo "restating the paper's core independent values in forward-looking terms", which is a small masterpiece of trite waffle. "Our hard liberalism earns respect because, far from being vague, it is a demanding discipline," Strobes drones. "Wherever we turn — at home, in school, on the street and in the workplace — we find hard choices that must be made. Our purpose is to inform those choices... Choices about where we want to spend our money — on travel perhaps, or fitness, or health, or on our garden or our homes..." And so, interminably, on.

Summing up, Strobes concludes that independence "means that our over-riding commitment is to our readers... They seek a friend (don't we all?) who is not intimidated by hearing or speaking the truth... By remaining unfettered by any allegiance other than that of loyalty to our readers, we aim to earn their trust."

This moving manifesto has not melted many hearts in City Road. Strobes's colleagues point out that his allegiance now is not to his readers but to David "Rommel" Montgomery's Mirror Group. In reply to his message, they have politely suggested (as candid friends should) that the best way of improving the paper would be for Strobes to resign — or, failing that, be kicked out.

This may yet happen. Montgomery has promised that Whittam Strobes will stay as editor, as a guarantee of the papers' continuing "independence". But "Rommel" gave similar guarantees about his editors' job security when he arrived at the helm of the *Mirror* — and then promptly sacked them. There is no reason to suppose things will be any different at the *Indie* if the "consortium" of the Mirror Group, *La Repubblica* and *El Pais* takes control. The Italians and Spaniards have already approached *Observer* editor Jonathan Fenby to see if he would like to replace Strobes, but he declined.

If the ownership battle is won by the rival bidder, Tony O'Reilly, other possible candidates will include Roy Greenslade (a former *Mirror* man, ironically enough) and Ivan Fallon, the *Sunset Times* hack who is O'Reilly's biographer and chief cheerleader. According to one bizarre rumour, O'Reilly also has his eye on Stewart Steven, editor of the London *Evening Standard*.

One thing is certain: whoever wins the struggle at the *Indie*, by this time next year Andreas Whittam Strobes will not be editor, whatever fond delusions to the contrary he may still have.

MEANWHILE, before *Indie* hacks start rejoicing at the prospect of Tony O'Reilly rescuing them from the clutches of the Mirror Group, perhaps they should cast a brief glance over his record as a press baron.

O'Reilly has long owned two Sunday titles in Ireland, the mass-market *World* and the *Sunday Independent*, which last year ran Gordon Thomas's bogus "interview" with the errant bishop of Galway, Eamon Casey.

He recently managed to grab a 20 per cent stake in a third Sabbath title, the erratically left-wing *Sunday Tribune*. To his obvious disgust, the rugby-playing tycoon was prevented from buying full control of the *Tribune* and met with continual defiance from its editor, Vincent Browne, who had personally led the paper's onslaught against the *Independent*'s Bishop Casey stunt.

Last month the *Tribune* ran an article ridiculing O'Reilly's pretensions and describing him as "the world's most famous would-be media magnate". Browne was summarily sacked five days later by the board of directors, with O'Reilly's appointees supporting his dismissal. Naturally this was a complete coincidence, as O'Reilly stresses his "hands off" approach to journalism.

Andreas Whittam Strobes may, however, have other reasons for opposing O'Reilly's bid. The first dates back to shortly after the *Indie*'s launch, when O'Reilly obtained an injunction in Dublin restricting the paper's circulation in Ireland on the ludicrous grounds that it could be confused with his similarly named (but otherwise totally different) local paper. The second came last year, when British publishers were forced to get injunctions against O'Reilly's papers, which had been blatantly plagiarising stories, photographs and even cartoons. Not even David Montgomery, who in his time as editor of *Today* was known as the Jackdaw, expected his staff to simply cut out and paste down whole chunks of other papers in the way O'Reilly did.

WHOEVER eventually takes charge at the *Indescribablyboring* will have to deal with the increasingly eccentric behaviour of its business editor, Chris Huhne.

On a cash-starved newspaper, in a department that has recently suffered three resignations and a sacking, Huhne has now decided to spend £22,000 of the *Indie*'s money on taking the surviving City hacks on a two-day management course at the London Business School.

No less bizarre is the sight of this former *Grauniad* journalist and SDP candidate driving through the City in a company-owned black BMW, registered as H11 HNE. A black fixing bolt between the two figures spells the name of the only editor on the daily or Sunday *Independents* to insist on announcing his identity to his readers in print seven days a week.

Huhne's London staff, who were all attending the management course this week, are none too happy at their boss's extravagance, knowing that he has imposed a pay freeze and once suggested that the salary of *Indie* hacks should be linked to their league position after an audit of column inches printed.

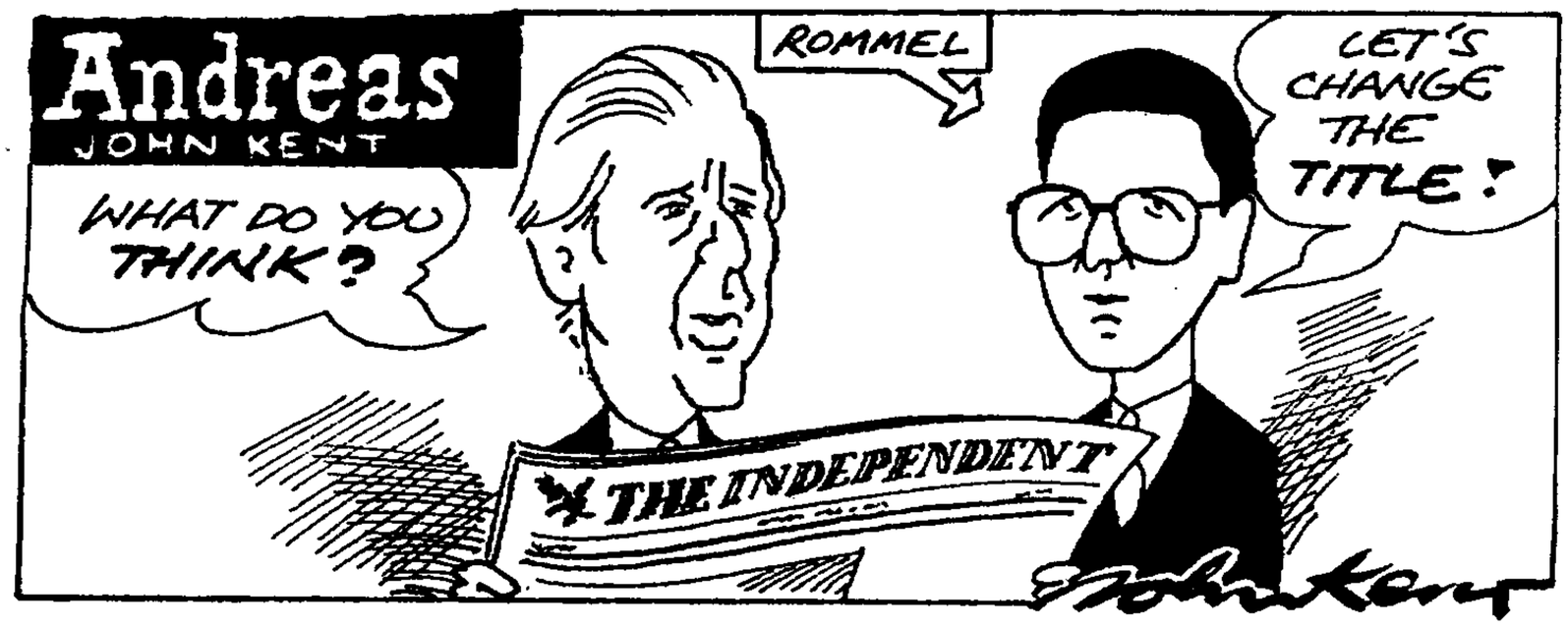
Huhne's own position would be amply protected under such a system, thanks to the inordinate length of his dry weekly column in the *Sindie*.

THE loneliness of Andreas Whittam Strobes — rejected by his board of directors, denounced by his hacks — was especially acute during last week's crisis at the paper.

His fellow-founder and shareholder Matthew Symonds, Strobes's last remaining friend on the editorial staff, has been laid up with "pneumonia" contracted after falling off a horse.

What puzzles *Indie* hacks is their newsdesk's reports that at the time of his tumble, Symonds was carrying a *gun*. Symonds is certainly unpopular, but surely even he does not need to go armed for his own protection when out on a gentle afternoon canter?

Some hacks have scoffed at the official version of events, claiming instead that the bouffant-haired Lothario merely fell off his Cuban heels and broke his hair.



FOREIGN MAN, 33/189/74, speak english, educated economist/ hotel manager, good cock, wishes to meet danish girl/woman, 30-40 years, for friendship.

Politiken (Denmark)

THE END of Tiny Rowland's regime at the *Observer* has, as promised, put a stop to all those puffs for unscrupulous businessmen plundering far-off countries. A good example is its glamorous 24-page supplement of 30 January entitled *Indonesia: Sustainable Development Growth Favours People's Welfare*.

The supplement is full of praise for British businesses which invest in Indonesia: companies like British Aerospace, which is providing the air force with 24 Hawk fighter planes (with an option on 96 more) and "the Royal Army for the production of small ammunition" (perhaps they mean the once-nationalised Royal *Ordnance*, now part of British Aerospace).

The supplement also gives a lot of space to the thoughts of Indonesia's president, Suharto, and his calls "for a responsible press".

For some reason there is no mention of East Timor, the former Portuguese colony illegally occupied in 1975 by Indonesia, whose brave troops have killed about a third of the population there. Nor is there a mention of the murder of two Australian cameramen who tried to take pictures there.

The supplement announces on its front page that it has been produced by Images, Words, Ltd, who are "solely responsible for its content". There is no registered company of that name. Images Ltd are hairdressers in Willesden; and Words Ltd is an off-the-shelf company based in Abingdon which has never traded.

LAST Wednesday, Peter McKay bored his *Evening Standard* reader (P. McKay: relation) with an account of his recent holiday in Budapest, where he had been accompanied by people he identified only as "The Don", "The Fledgling Barrister", "The Magistrate", "The Young Historian", and so on.

In the original version of the article the one vaguely interesting bit mentioned that the Young Historian (who was in fact Andrew Roberts, Lord Halifax's biographer) had not got on too well with The Magistrate (David Fingleton, a north London stipendiary who writes opera criticism for the *Daily Express*).

Just before the piece appeared, however, young Roberts happened to be chatting on the telephone to the *Standard*'s assistant editor, Sarah Sands. When he heard that the paper was going to reveal his feelings about Fingleton, the Young Historian let out a panic-stricken howl. "You must cut that sentence," he pleaded. "It's *got* to come out." Why so? Sands inquired. "Because," Roberts wailed, "I've just asked Fingleton to put me up for the Garrick Club."

Naturally, Sands was deeply moved by this heart-rending plea and cut the offending passage forthwith.

JAMES WOOD, the *Grauniad*'s insufferably self-important "chief literary critic", is a sworn foe of the Booker prize.

When last year's shortlist was announced, he denounced the "petulance" and "snobbishness" of Booker juries, in a long article which was itself exceedingly petulant and snobbish.

Asking a Booker jury to judge literature, he argued, was "like asking shade to speak of light". The prize's management committee — who select the Booker jury — "must take much of the blame" for consistently selecting judges who were "middlebrow" and "incompetent".

It will be interesting to see if he publishes a similar attack this year. For the management committee which he so despises has just chosen the jury for the 1994 prize; and, lo and behold, it includes James Wood.

HALLO!

The new heartwarming column

HALLO! A CERTAIN contender for the Booker prize — if not the Pulitzer and Nobel prizes — is *A Parliamentary Affair* by brilliant first-time novelist and stockings-wearer, Edwina Currie. But on whom is the journalist character Miranda Jamieson based?

Certainly not on Amanda Platell, the intensely able promotions director of Mirror Group Newspapers appointed by the charming David Montgomery. Sadly, the *Observer* tells us, Amanda is considering legal action against Edwina over Jamieson, the Australian-born deputy editor of a newspaper called the *Daily Globe*.

Coincidentally, Amanda is Australian and a senior newspaper executive. But the similarity ends there. Edwina's fictional character is suspected by colleagues of having won her job because of her looks and her "special relationship" with the paper's publisher. No one has ever voiced such an outrageous suspicion about Ms Platell and nor should they.

The only positive identification in the novel is that its female protagonist, one Elaine Stalker MP, is meant to be Edwina. She is said to be extremely attractive, highly talented, with a genius for self-publicity, etc, etc. However, Mrs Stalker also has extra-marital oral and rear-entry sex with the chief whip and drives her daughter to an attempted suicide. Surely Edwina should sue herself for such an appalling libel. After all, she once sued the *Observer* for suggesting that the fictional protagonist in David Hare's film *Paris by Night* was partly based on her. Hare's heroine, a Tory Euro MP, was an adulteress and a murderer. Come on, Edwina: get your writs out for the lads. (*What does this mean? The Marquesa.*)

"Do you come here a) often, b) not very often, or c) hardly ever?"

HALLO! FURTHER to our story about the "quick gulp" that *Sunday Times* journalist Chrissy Iley took from the theatrical genius Steven Berkoff, we have learnt how this unfortunate incident came to the notice of the *Sunday Times*'s debonair editor, Andrew Neill.

He was enjoying his luxurious Christmas break as part of Michael Winner's house party in Barbados, when Joan Collins, misunderstanding the story entirely, shouted across the pool: "Andrew, dear, what's this I hear about you employing prostitutes to do interviews for the *Sunday Times Magazine*?"

We have also overheard a shocking confession from the comic actor Rowland Rivron, who was lunching with a friend. When the friend said that Mr Berkoff had been treated for a pancreatic condition in a Dublin hotel by a *Sunday Times* journalist on an interview assignment, Rivron asked: "Her name wouldn't happen to be Chrissy Iley, would it?"

"Why, yes," answered his lunch companion.

"She interviewed me once and I shagged her in the hotel loo," Rivron explained further.

HALLO! HE MAY be in his eighties, but Peter Carter-Fuck, the doyen of money (*Shurely "The doyen of London libel solicitors"? Ed.*) has lost none of his zest for litigation.

His latest client to "have a go" is former army captain Abigail Kirby-Harris, who has started libel proceedings against five non-executive directors of the Cornwall Healthcare Trust after they passed a vote of no-confidence in her chairmanship.

As Mrs Kirby-Harris explained in the Cornish press: "I have gone to the best libel lawyers in the country with a virtually unbroken track record of success. I would not be proceeding unless they advised me to do so."

We hope no one reminds her that Peter Carter-Fuck & Partners' track record includes such victorious, high-profile plaintiffs as Derek Jameson, Jani Allan and *House of Cards* author Michael Dobbs, who ignominiously withdrew from a libel action against Melvyn Bragg and the *Evening Standard* after Christmas.

Like Mrs Kirby-Harris, Dobbs had been advised to sue by the octogenarian lawyer, yet when the *Standard*'s editor Stewart Steven wrote a public letter in his paper drawing attention to inconsistencies in Dobbs's position, the action was promptly dropped.

HALLO! WE HEAR that Edward Heath has a little coterie of admirers among the young Tory MPs in the House of Commons — and an admirably frank way of speaking to them.

The other night the "Grocer" remarked to Mr Michael Fabricant: "Is that a wig you're wearing?"

"Yes sir," admitted the astonished member for Mid-Staffordshire.

"Well, it's not a very good one!" smiled the genial former premier.

HALLO! *WE ARE dismayed that the libel nightmare is still not over for demure EastEnders actress Gillian Taylforth and her charming boyfriend, Mr Geoff Knights.*

For when the couple took on the tittle tattle merchants of Fleet Street, it seems they bit off more than even the game Gillian could chew.

Not content with suing the Sun, the pair issued writs against the Daily Express and Daily Star, and both papers have incurred considerable costs preparing to defend the actions.

We gather that unless Gillian and Geoff pursue them into court, the papers intend to recover their costs, estimated at £30,000. Like the big sausage Gillian fooled around with in that hilarious video, you don't get many libel actions to the £ these days.

"Mum, Dad, this is Ornvox. He's from the planet Zlub"

HALLO! VISITING the comfortable home of Tony Marlow, the Tory MP for Northampton North who made all those brave visits to Iraq (see last *Eye*), we are shown around his comfortable front door and no further.

Hallo! didn't have the time to visit his sitting room, on whose mantelpiece we were hoping to spy the famous photo of Mr Marlow and the Butcher of Baghdad, Saddam Hussein. Is it still there? And was it taken before or after the Kurds were gassed? Perhaps other visitors to the Marlow *wadi* can let us know...

Photo or no photo, Iraq has clearly left its mark on the MP. His proposed amendment to the criminal justice and public order bill — that offenders should be paraded for all to see in a public place — is so enlightened it could have come straight from the penal code of that great reformer, Saddam Hussain.

HALLO! *THE EXCITING, bisexual black footballer Justin Fashanu claims to be sickened by the hypocrisy of the government and its "back to basics" policy. We are sure that it is his sense of indignation — and not the £300,000 price tag he has placed on the naming of names — that induced Fashanu to reveal to The People that he had three-in-a-bed gay sex romps with two senior members of the government at the house of a third gay Tory MP.*

Haven't we heard this before? In 1991 we dismissed as absurd the suggestion, made by Esquire's then literary editor Julian Evans, that John Major, no less, was having an affair with Mr Fashanu. This latest claim is as daft as the earlier one, but we hesitate to dismiss it: as Michael Portillo has said, our fine country is indeed being run down by cynics.

The Marquesa

DR R.M. WATSON AND MR LAIRD GARRARD APOLOGY

ON 9th April 1993 we referred to a libel action brought by Dr Robert Murray Watson and Mr Laird Garrard over an article published in the November 1989 edition of New African magazine. The suggestion that they brought this action as part of a conspiracy by them with the Somali Government to pervert the course of justice or to injure or silence New African and Richard Greenfield was totally unfounded as was the allegation that they should not have received the damages and apology that they did.

We apologise to Dr Watson and Mr Garrard for the damage and embarrasment which they have been caused by our article.

ONE OF the most devastating attacks on a leading British institution was made in the Commons last month by Paul Marland, the mild-mannered Tory MP for Gloucestershire West.

In a short debate on insider dealing, Marland rounded on Lloyd's of London, accusing it in turn of widespread corruption, fraud and interference with the parliamentary process.

He first attacked the "baby syndicates" whereby the big boys at Lloyd's syphoned off insurance goodies at the expense of external names. Declaring his interest as a Lloyd's name, Marland then accused Lloyd's directly of recruiting a lot of "sucker" names in the mid- and late 1980s to pay for asbestos and oil pollution claims which existing names could not afford. He quoted the then deputy chairman of Lloyd's, Robert Hiscox, as saying of the names: "If God had not meant them to be sheared, he would not have made them sheep." This policy, Marland alleged, had led to at least 30 suicides.

Marland's most remarkable allegation was about the 1982 Lloyd's bill in which the Commons (with the help of Marland himself and most of the parliamentary Labour party) nodded through a bill allowing Lloyd's to regulate itself. That bill, he said, had allowed the Lloyd's robbery to continue apace. Moreover, the insurance market had blatantly ignored undertakings it had made to the house before the bill was passed. Marland then alleged interference and bribery.

"There is no doubt," he said, "that a great deal of elbow-clutching went on in the house during the early 1980s when the bill went through. We were told 'Don't worry old boy, it will be all right. Would you like to come and have lunch with the chairman?' Many of us were put through that treatment."

Marland's speech caused dismay and outrage among his colleagues. Elaine Kellett-Bowman, Tory MP for Lancaster, without declaring she was a name at Lloyd's asked whether Marland would make his speech outside the house. He replied that yes, he certainly would, since the facts in all his allegations were on the record.

Peter Viggers (Gosport, Con) leapt to his feet, declaring he was a member of the council at Lloyd's and warning that if Marland "were to repeat his speech outside the house I think he would find himself subject to a number of libel writs".

Marland replied that he hoped Viggers was "deeply ashamed of what his friends in Lime Street have been up to". With friends like these, do Tory MPs need enemies?

ACCUSATIONS of municipal gerry-mandering at Westminster — where Lady Tesco is alleged to have spent £20 million on buying a handful of Tory votes — are nothing compared to the wheeze being prepared by Scottish secretary Ian Lang.

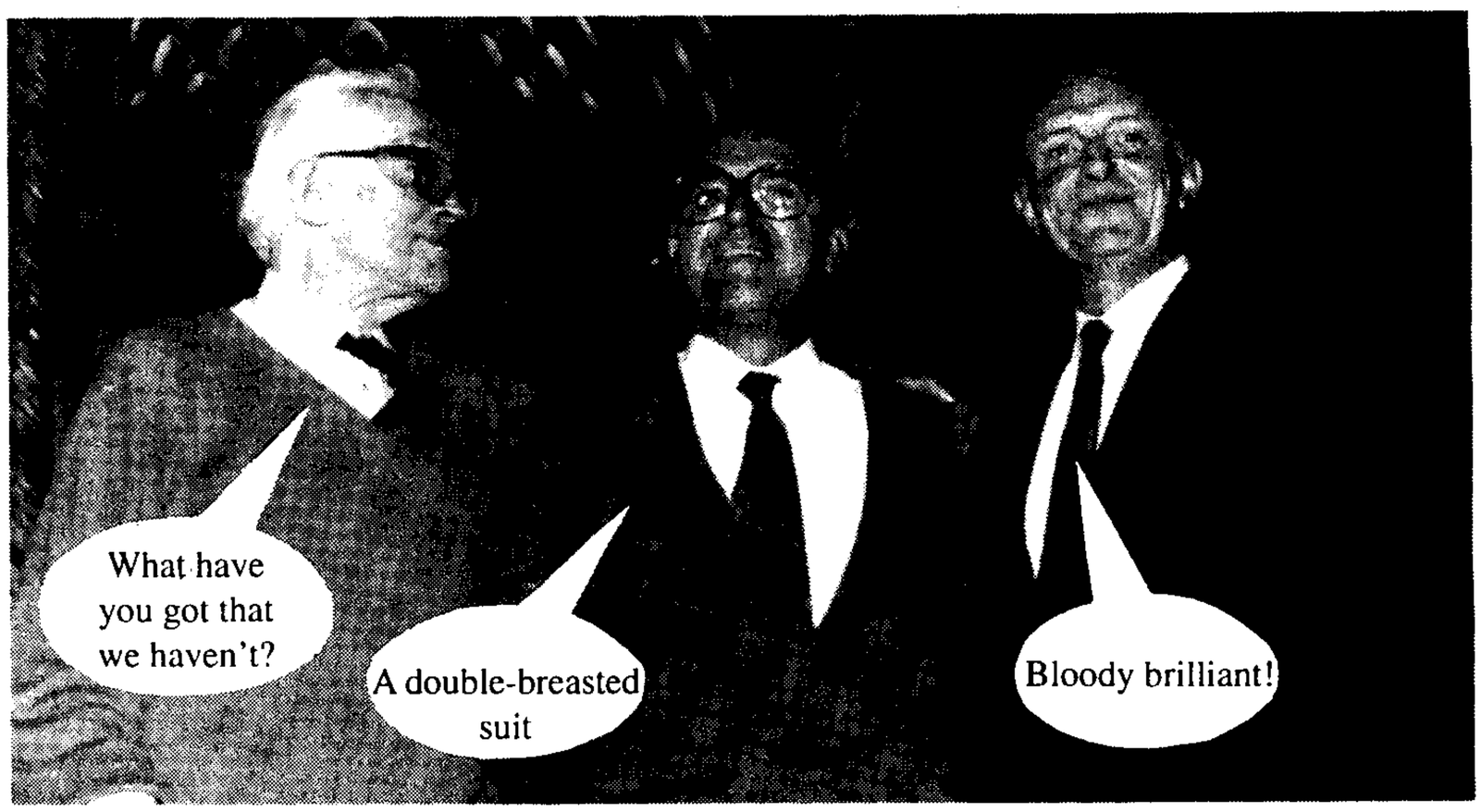
Via the innocently named "local government... etc (Scotland) bill", Lang — Major's man in Edinburgh — plans to spend many more times this sum in gerrymandering the largely Labour-controlled Scottish local authorities to create a handful of Tory election prospects.

The naked political carve-up includes the aggrandisement of Eastwood district — the affluent, if reluctant, suburb of Glasgow where the sitting and sole city Tory MP is Allan Stewart, by coincidence the Scottish local government minister — into the grandiose, self-sufficient and self-serving council of East Renfrewshire.

Similarly, the hotly-disputed Stirling district council, which is the parliamentary seat of that favoured son on Scottish Conservative politics, Michael Forsyth MP, has been curiously welded into a single municipality in Lang's bill.

Such is the perceived abuse of power that even the Scottish Labour party has for once been provoked into pretending to be a proper opposition party.

YES! IT'S LABOUR



A NEW cabinet committee has been invented by John "open government" Major — quietly added to the official list with no public announcement.

Until a year ago, the composition and even the existence of the committees were official secrets. Now the public is allowed to know that they are there, but Downing Street still does not like to draw too much attention to them.

The list for the autumn had 17 committees; the list for this year has 18. The newcomer has been named officially as Regeneration, and it is likely to be the one handling that elusive concept, back to basics.

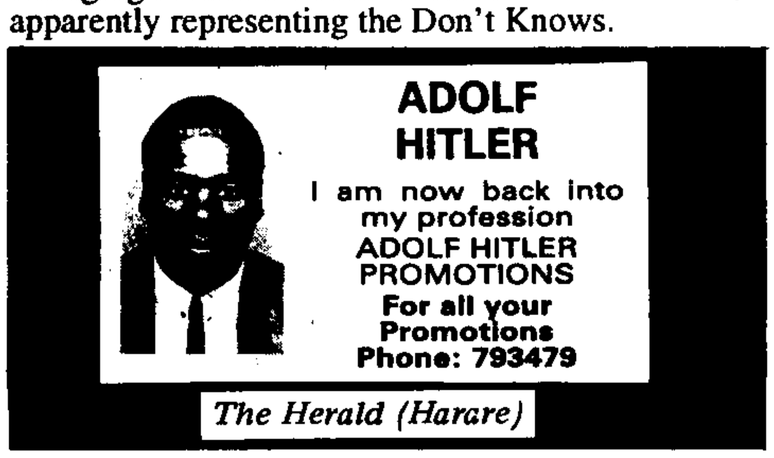
The sensitive task of chairing the new committee falls to Lord Wakeham, who thus consolidates his position as head of more cabinet committees (five) than any other minister apart from the prime minister. In the last parliament he headed four.

Cabinet ministers serving under the non-elected Wakeham on "regeneration" are Heseltine, Hunt, Gummer, MacGregor, Howard, Patten, Waldegrave, Portillo and Young — all the top brass except Hurd and Clarke. Their task is "to consider regeneration policies and their coordination." Coordinating anything between ultra-dry Michael Portillo and dripping wet David Hunt should be a challenge even for the wily Wakeham.

PETER MANDELSON, the spin doctor who became an MP, fought a desperate battle last week to retain his chairmanship of the obscure Labour backbench treasury committee against a challenge from left-winger Roger Berry, an economist who co-authored a critical *Tribune* leaflet about economic policy.

Mandelson, who has never shown much interest in economics, realised it would be a blow to his prestige if he were unseated and suddenly a lot of new recruits joined the committee, including frontbenchers who normally leave backbenchers to get on with it.

Membership rose from 46 to 102 and attendance surged from the usual eight to 69 in the bid to save Mandelson's face. Even so, the frontbenchers were split with Derek Fatchett, Dawn Primarolo, John Battle and John Garrett (normally on the right) backing Berry, who lost by 30 votes to 39. That left quite a few non-voters. Aside from the left-right tussle, a third grouping is emerging around a Robin Cook/John Prescott axis, apparently representing the Don't Knows.



ONE OF the most courageous decisions of the new model Labour party was not to oppose the second reading of the criminal justice bill, which removes from prisoners and defendants constitutional rights established for more than 300 years.

The meeting of the parliamentary Labour party (PLP) before the bill was discussed was told that the shadow cabinet had not yet made up its mind what to do, thus avoiding any discussion among MPs, most of whom assumed the bill would be opposed.

The decision to submit a bromide amendment which did not even mention the worst part of the bill — the abolition of the right to silence — and then to let the bill through when the amendment failed, was pushed through by Tony "Baton" Blair.

The battle over the right to silence was left, as so often, to a few dissidents, among them Richard Shepherd, the rebel *Tory* MP for Aldridge-Brownhills. Shepherd's was the only intervention in the debate which disturbed the home secretary, Michael Howard. The backbencher pointed out that the royal commission had studied the arguments for and against the right to silence at great length, and that its research plainly refuted the government's contention that it led to guilty people being acquitted. Why did the government not support the majority of a commission it itself had set up?

Stopped in his tracks, Howard mumbled that the minority report of the royal commission took the government view, so the government felt able to ignore the majority. He turned at once to the more agreeable and easier task of bashing the dithering Blair.

THE cabinet office worker named at the Scott inquiry as having decided *not* to inform John Major that he had been given false information has since changed her job — and been promoted.

At the time of the Iraq happenings, Sonia Phippard was private secretary to Sir Robin Butler, the cabinet secretary. She was named at the inquiry on 28 January. Sir Robin was said to have told Major that the government could deny it was aware that Matrix Churchill machine tools were used to build up the Iraqi military machine. DTI officials said this was wrong but that the cabinet office had decided not to correct the information, the decision being taken by Miss Phippard.

Miss Phippard then had the rank of G7 (salary scale: £24,239-£39,227). She has now advanced two steps up to the rank of G5 (£36,019-£55,836) and bears the grand title of Director of Next Steps in the Management Development Group. That, says the cabinet office, means she is overseeing the programme of turning government functions into executive agencies — ie creating new quangos.

Anyone who thinks her promotion is linked to her apparent readiness to take the blame for the prime minister's ignorance is being silly.

● *Scott inquiry: see Footnotes.*

'Backbiter'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

SOUTH HEREFORDSHIRE

COUNCILLORS from the rural wastes of South Herefordshire are taking no chances in preparing for next Christmas.

Planning applications for two poultry houses with space for 14,500 nicely fattening turkeys have been approved by councillors — despite petitions from residents anxious about the smell and noise, and the opposition of council officers worried about the suitability of foul-laden lorries on narrow local roads.

Nevertheless the South Hereford planning committee approved the applications by 14 votes to eight after stirring speeches from the council's ruddy-cheeked members about the problems faced by farmers and the harmlessness of intensive poultry farms.

The applications had been submitted by turkey-loving local Richard Vines. By an amazing coincidence, Vines is the son of the council's chairman, local farmer Edward Vines.

BENT

HOT ON the heels of Tower Hamlets, Bent, Britain's barmiest borough, is trying to muzzle the local press.

Ken Livingstone, the Labour MP for Bent East, recently complained in the Commons that the Tory-run council had threatened its fearless local rag, the *Kilburn Times*, with withdrawal of advertising revenue if the paper continued to publish hostile articles.

Bent swiftly denied that any such threat had been made, but news of Red Ken's speech failed to warrant a mention in the paper — usually keen to fill its columns with the great man's every utterance — and the hacks' copy is now being monitored by the paper's general manager for signs of any, er, anti-Bent bent.

Coincidentally, the *Kilburn Times*' parent group, Capital Newspapers, is part-owned by businessman Ray Tyndall, who last year contributed £100,000 to Tory party funds.

WYRE FOREST

WEIRD happenings in Worcestershire, where the Tory mayor of Stourport-on-Severn, Patrick Duffy, who was jailed before Christmas for using a forged candidate nomination form in an election, has been freed by the court of appeal.

Duffy, a district councillor for Wyre Forest and a parish councillor for Stourport, was locked up after he admitted "inventing" a candidate who stood as an independent in a by-election in the hope of splitting the independent vote to the benefit of the Tories.

Duffy, who became mayor soon afterwards, was later arrested for electoral malpractice. He pleaded guilty at Stafford crown court under the 1981 forgery act and was sentenced to six months — the first time an incumbent mayor has been jailed while in office.

But in January, after Duffy had been in jail for a month, a funny thing happened. The appeal court decided that Duffy had broken no law and that his actions were common practice in the wacky world of local government.

Duffy has had his sentence replaced with an absolute discharge while remaining mayor throughout!

LEEDS

IN THE WAKE of the Armley asbestos scandal (*Eyes passim*), in which hundreds of homes were contaminated by dust from a former asbestos factory, Leeds city council insisted that compensation should be paid by factory owners, T&N.

Taking up the theme, people living in what is known as the Asbestos Triangle launched a campaign calling on shareholders to withdraw their investments from T&N unless it cleaned up its act. Imagine their surprise when they found that a major investor in T&N is the West Yorkshire Superannuation Fund... the biggest member of which is none other than, er, Leeds city council.

A council inquiry into the investment is promised, along with the inquiry into why environmental health officers apparently failed to spot asbestos blowing over a whole neighbourhood for decades.

MURKEYSIDE

THE distinction between public service and private gain is now so blurred it even extends to the municipal library.

Liverpool ratepayers, expecting a 25 percent increase in council tax in April, were outraged to learn that Paul Catcheside, head of the city's library services, has had a private business *on the side* selling old library books.

Not content with the £35,000 a year Liverpool pays him, "Cashside" was flogging ex-library stock bought from his own department. The chief librarian has taken the matter of failing to declare an outside interest fairly lightly, however, expecting only "a rap over the knuckles" after councillors investigate his conduct. Nevertheless, Liverpool citizens feel his resignation is itself a bit like a library book — ie long overdue.

Private enterprise also extends to the provision of supply teachers for Liverpool's schools. The chair of education, Gideon Ben-Tovim, has off-loaded responsibility for providing cover to a private company, Educational Support Services Ltd, which interestingly leaves out the "Ltd" when advertising in the local press.

Supply teachers now lose up to £1,140 in wages for the "privilege" of having a job found for them by the agency. Based in a council-owned building, ESS gives the *appearance* of being a council-run operation, but it fails to tell teachers that they will be selling their labour short.

BIRMINGHAM

MORE on the radical employment policies of Birmingham council — and one John Curtin, appointed by the city in 1992 to run its Alexandra Theatre, home of the D'Oyly Carte Opera, with no checks on his record.

Curtin promptly ran up £2 million in debts, despite council grants of £1.6 million in the last year alone. It was only when creditors were about to foreclose and Curtin asked the city for another £825,000 that the council decided to check on him and his accounting.

It learnt what it should have known all along: that Curtin was convicted of fraud at Canterbury crown court in September 1981 after admitting stealing £1,030 and falsifying books and accounts in a fruit and veg firm where he was managing director. He got 18 months suspended for two years and had to pay compensation.

He was later sacked by the Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury which discovered his conviction. This revelation was made when John Kelly, the liquidator sent in by Ernst & Young, found that Curtin had taken at least £41,000 from the Alexandra's funds for his own use. Other revelations have followed — including the disappearance of £4,000 raised at a charity concert organised by the Lara Marshall memorial fund.

The council's blundering recruitment could mean the loss of the whole theatre to developers, as this is said by some to be the only way to raise enough money to pay its debts.

ECONOMICS ILLUSTRATED: No. 94

THE TRICKLEDOWN EFFECT

MEANWHILE the employment policies of Birmingham's top Tory, councillor Bernard Zissman, are creating waves.

Zissman's firm, Spectrum Communications, has been taken to industrial tribunals by the Commission for Racial Equality twice in the last year over alleged racial discrimination against Afro-Caribbean staff. Zissman avoided publicity with last minute settlements.

In the first case Daphne Howells, taken on to run Spectrum while Zissnian was mayor of Birmingham, was sacked by him as soon as he was back in power. He did not expect her to fight back, but she called in the CRE. He settled her claim for racial discrimination out of court for £5,000.

Next was Evelyn Muirhead, employed as company secretary of another firm, Graphic View, until it was taken over by Zissman — who promptly reduced her to filing duties and sacked her. The CRE took Zissman to an industrial tribunal for racial discrimination — and again he paid up.

HUNT NEWS

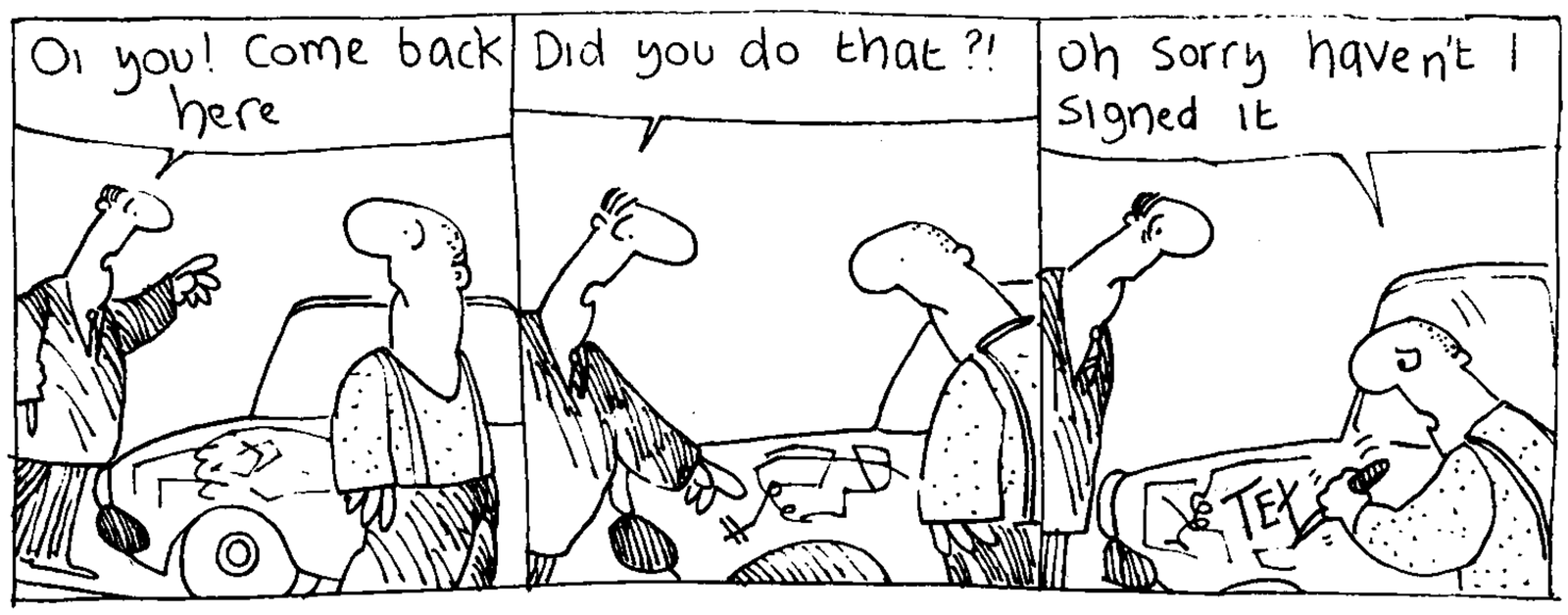
AS MPs prepare to consider Michael Howard's proposed sanctions against hunt saboteurs in the criminal justice bill, it is worth recalling that hunt members and supporters are themselves responsible for much of the violence and intimidation involved.

On 2 February three hunt saboteurs were hospitalised after being battered by a member of the Old Surrey & Burstow foxhunt. They had attempted to intervene when they saw a hunt member whipping his horse across the face while pushing it into a horse box.

The hunt member then flourished a hammer and started hitting the saboteurs: two suffered severe bruising to the arms and heads while the third suffered a head wound that needed five stitches.

Other saboteurs noted the assailant's vehicle registration number and reported it to Uckfield police. An arrest followed.

HUSBAND



RadioTimes

The 1994 Reith Lectures
(Radio 4)

MARINA WARNER — intellectual heroine of the postal districts NW3, BBC2 and R4 — would probably not think she had much in common with Danny Baker, the people's broadcaster. But she would be wrong. Both Ms Warner and Mr Baker have had the misfortune to become involved in the desperate attempts of BBC radio to reposition itself.

Prompted by the greater competition from commercial stations, the BBC's five national radio stations have all got the decorators in at the moment. Radio 1 has replaced ageing career DJs with media generalists like Danny Baker and Emma Freud. Early audience returns are not encouraging.

Radio 3 has been urged by managing director Liz Forgan to seek out announcers with non-RP accents; for exhorted example "lovely rich Brummie." Radio 5 is disappearing completely, to be replaced by the news and sport channel.

In this atmosphere of nervous repointing, it is Radio 4 that has the biggest problems. It is perhaps the most static channel in broadcasting history. On the pre-change Radio 1, all the presenters might have been pushing 50, but, on Radio 4, it's the programmes that are coming up for their gold watches. *Desert Island Discs, The Archers, Down Your Way, Gardener's Question Time, Just A Minute* all grew up calling what they did wireless. So too did *The Reith Lectures*, a title in which both the second word and the third embody ancient, and almost abandoned, radio traditions: of Olympian, instructional never-count-the-listeners broadcasting.

It's a sign of the jumpiness at Radio 4 that even *The Reith Lectures* — the last taboo in the schedule — have this year been subject to "popularisation". The first reform — of both lecturer, Marina Warner, and producer, Elizabeth Burke, being, for the first time in 33 years, women — has less to do with audience-sensitivity than media orthodoxy, but every other innovation betrays the fatal nervousness about material and audience which is the first sign of a "cultural product" — as Ms Warner would put it — being in serious trouble.

First, the subject. Although she has the background and interests of a top-of-the-range intellectual nob, Ms Warner also watches the telly, takes her children to the flicks and speed-reads comics while tidying the house. So, although her Reith Lectures would consider the academic subject of "myth", she would be able to produce passages like: "But in the prevailing popular concept of masculinity, as reflected in comics, rock bands, street fashion and Clint Eastwood or Arnold Schwarzenegger movies, the little man, the riddler or trickster, has yielded before the warrior hero, the paradigm of the fittest survivor..."

One minute, she's talking about "Hydra or Medusa or Chimera", the next "Robocop or Slugathon". She'll go from Medusa to *Jurassic Park* in 10 minutes flat. In her books and articles, this kind of thing from Warner is just an incidental bit of rough — a frisky illustration of her intellectual range — but the BBC publicity department has not played by donnish rules. The listener could have been forgiven for thinking, on the basis of the advance billings, that the 1994 Reith Lectures were essentially a review of *Jurassic Park* and *Robocop*. Even the Reith Lectures have to huckster now.

But Warner's talks suit the new-sound Radio 4 as much as they please the publicity department. At one level, "myth" is just a fancy word for "anecdote". And these Reith Lectures are full of them. Warner can recount "urban myths" — those hand-me-down stories about vanishing hitch-hikers and so on — and also admit anthropological filth. Did you know that the Sambia tribe practise "ritual fellatio of men by boys... in order to transmit the necessary semen for manhood from generation to generation"?

As a collage of anecdotes, many of them sexual, Warner's talks are closer in form to an ordinary Radio 4 programme than any previous Reith Lecture. The only significant difference is that all of the stories and opinions are delivered in her own voice. And, even here, the distinction is not complete. Producer Elizabeth Burke has broken with the convention of an uninterrupted address and allowed readings by actors, film clips, musical stings.

But, in doing so, Warner and Burke have merely exposed the archaism of the form. The Reith Lectures were born at a time when the lecture — or scripted talk — was a standard unit of the radio schedule. Making the Reith Lecture in to a Reith Documentary — *Modern Myths*, presented by Marina Warner, is a perfectly credible programme idea — is one of those adjustments that advances, rather than delays, redundancy.

What next? Will the 1995 Reith Lecturer be Danny Baker on class? That would address Liz Forgan's concerns about accents and Radio 4's about audience simultaneously, although it might also invoke what Ms Warner would doubtless call "the ancient legend of the child and the waters in which it is cleansed — both jettisoned simultaneously".

'Square Ears'

BIRTUAL REALITY

MEDIA NEWS

IN RECENT weeks many BBC TV staff have been watching, with great pleasure, an unofficial "Christmas tape" put together by members of the post-production department.

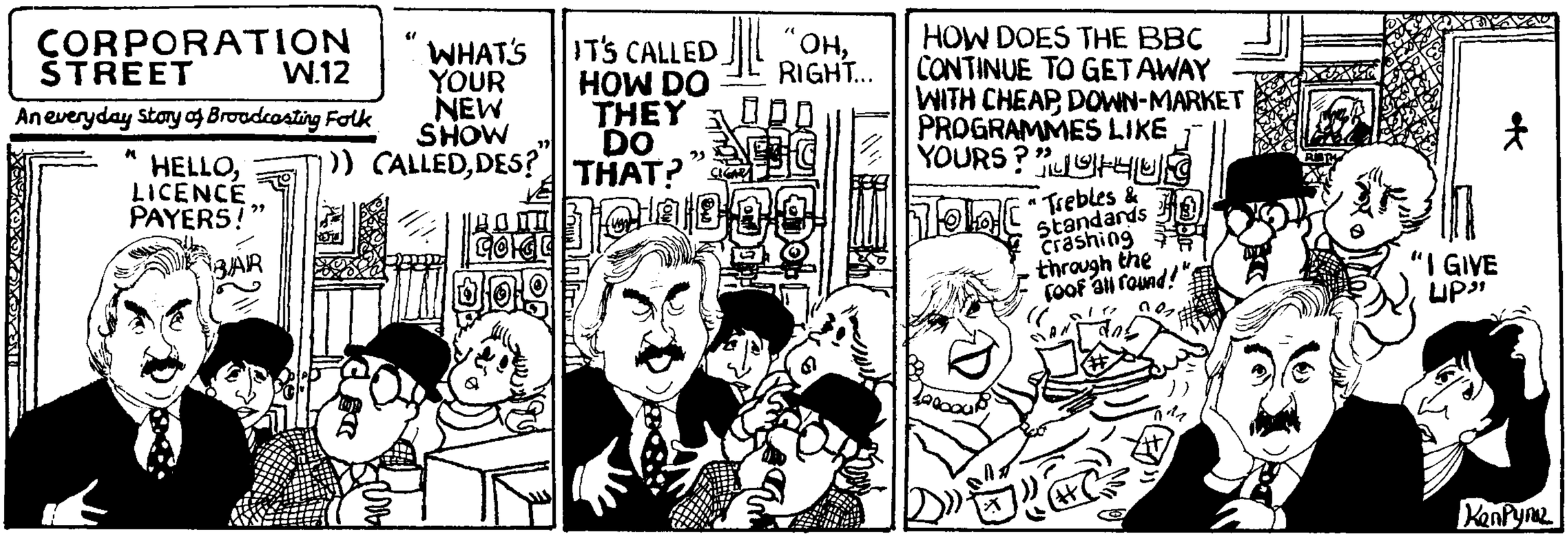
These annual videos are usually compilations of out-takes in the manner of *It'll Be Alright on the Night*, but this year's *samizdat* offering was a fullscale satire on Producer Choice and all the other loopy manifestations of Birtism, culminating in a highly professional musical finale starring a Birt lookalike and a chorus of Daleks.

But post-production employees at Television Centre had the smiles wiped off their faces a fortnight ago when they learnt that no fewer than 115 of them are to be made redundant. Up to 60 film editors, 19 graphic designers and eight photographers are included in this latest cost-cutting exercise.

It seems unlikely, however, that the massacre was provoked by the Christmas tape. The official reason is that, under Producer Choice, it's cheaper for programme-makers to use outside editing facilities, because of the high overheads at the BBC. The overheads are high, of course, because of the ever-growing Birtian army of "administrators" and apparatchiks. But how many of these managers will be made redundant alongside the dozens of skilled technical staff? Why, a full three.

What particularly galls the victims of this latest purge is that they were told only a few months previously by Jonathan Gibbs, head of post-production operations, that the 5 per cent shortfall expected in the department's budget would be recoverable. "We are not panicking," he wrote in the staff newsletter, *Outside Edge*. Now he has decided that panic is the best policy after all.

Madder still is that fact that he is pressing ahead with a huge scheme to retrain film editors in the new, computerised "non-linear technology". The cost of the retraining will be half a million pounds — but between 50 and 60 of the people retrained will then be sacked immediately afterwards. It would be hard to find a better illustration of the genius of Birtism: destroy the craft and technical base of the BBC in the name of cost-cutting, and simultaneously waste lots of licence-payers' money in the process. Trebles all round!


CORPORATION STREET W.12
An everyday story of Broadcasting Folk
"HELLO, LICENCE PAYERS!"
BAIR
)) "WHAT'S YOUR NEW SHOW CALLED, DES?"
IT'S CALLED HOW DO THEY DO THAT?"
"OH, RIGHT...
HOW DOES THE BBC CONTINUE TO GET AWAY WITH CHEAP, DOWN-MARKET PROGRAMMES LIKE YOURS?"
"Trebles & standards crashing through the roof all round!"
"I GIVE UP"
KenPyne

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

ALARMING reports reach the *Eye* from the Barbican Centre, where new broom Detta O'Cathain continues to make her mark — anyone who does not share the baroness's views seems to be sacked.

Several key staff have resigned in recent months: arts director Antony Lewis-Crosby; marketing director Ian Lush; head of music and arts projects Cecile Latham-Koenig; and head of security Simon Dance.

That was phase one. The chief victim of the latest purge is Rosalyn Wilder, a senior arts manager since the centre opened. Also to go are the promotions manager; three members of the marketing team; the head of development; and various operational and PR people.

Dame Detta explained her vision for the future at a meeting last month. It seems to boil down to exposing the place to market forces, and she sees herself as a facilitator, offering the LSO, the RSC, etc, the resources to carry out and coordinate their artistic plans. Sounds fine in principle — but it hardly convinced all her staff.

THE ever-expanding management team at the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, whose proportion to players is now a staggering 18/37 (as reported in *Eye* 836), continues to give a virtuoso performance.

Three weeks ago, its concert programme managed to describe Schumann's 1st Symphony as "Schubert's" 1st Symphony. The week before that, the SCO office sent conductor Nick McGegan the score of Haydn's Cello Concerto in D instead of the one in C which the orchestra was due to play. Last week, the orchestra gave a concert in Kirkcaldy: in a laudable attempt to cut down on inaccuracies, no programmes were provided at all.

Still, there is some good news. A bequest to the orchestra of about £150,000, as yet kept secret from most of the players, will remove the need for any tightening of management belts for the time being. A small part of it has been earmarked for promoting an opera recording this summer, which would otherwise have been in jeopardy. But there is no question of using any of the loot to promote concerts, in spite of the fact that the orchestra has almost no work in July and very large gaps in May and September.

Instead of being commemorated in some artistic project, it will be discreetly used to pay off the orchestra's current deficit — a deficit not helped by the fact that the heavily staffed SCO bureaucracy needs an annual amount equivalent to three such bequests to sustain its uniquely creative style.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

LAST summer I suggested that British Aerospace would be in no particular hurry to sell Rover, as it was released from its undertaking given to the Government when it bought the car maker five years earlier.

Today, after getting a glimpse of how well Rover performed in 1993, it still holds true.

Michael Smith, Business Editor, The Observer 30.1.94 (the day before the BMW sale)

LUVVIES

Some people hate voice-overs. I love them. They're like a haiku poem — you have ten seconds to get it exactly right. Shaving a millimetre or a second off something is riveting.

JOANNA LUMLEY
Radio Times

Submitted by Mark Fisher.

An occasional column devoted to the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

HACKWATCH: Anne Diamond

WHEN Anne Robinson resigned from the *Daily Mirror* last year, her seat was swiftly occupied by Anne Diamond, the "Miss Ordinary" who used to host TV-am with Nick Owen and now does the same double-act on *Good Morning*. The reasoning was simple: Anne Diamond's on telly, just like Anne Robinson.

It soon became all too apparent that Diamond's TV fame was indeed her only noteworthy feature. Her opinions are banal, her style bland — unless she's writing about her "kids", when she comes over all gooey. Still, why should she worry? The *Mirror* pays her £1,800 for each of her weekly offerings. Here's what it gets in return:

14 April: "I went shopping for Easter eggs the other day and a lady approached me and asked if I was Anne Diamond." And no wonder. For, as we shall be constantly reminded, Anne is indeed a TV star. A new book about the Beirut hostages prompts this urgent question: "How many times did I interview Jill Morrell during those dark days of John McCarthy's captivity, on that TV-am sofa? I lose count." Elsewhere in the column she takes the opportunity to plug her new show. "Today, on *Good Morning*, Nick and I will be discussing TV with Alan Yentob, the new controller of BBC1. I wonder what he'll say." We'll just have to watch it to find out, won't we?

21 April: Anne has noticed that Bosnia is in the news. "When Nick Owen and I first started our morning TV programme, we tried to describe to TV correspondents how it would handle current affairs issues... Yesterday we felt we just had to look at what was happening in the former Yugoslavia — and we had the greatest response we've EVER had to a phone-in."

28 April: "I, like Martyn Lewis, am asked daily why TV news has to be so depressing." Why is she asked? Because she is one of the "people who work in TV".

5 May.: Anne is not only a TV presenter. She is also, she informs us, "a mum working in the media".

26 May: To prove the point, today's column has a photo of Anne with her two sons and her new-born baby, below a huge headline: "Let Everyone Share This Baby Happiness."

2 June: The Royal College of General Practitioners thinks the image of GPs needs improving. "They must be bonkers," she writes. "Have they not switched on the telly recently? Haven't they seen the effect our smashing *Good Morning* and *Sunday Mirror* doctor Mark Porter is having on women throughout the land? One look at him brandishing his rubber gloves and stethoscope last week and I went straight into labour." TV doctors, as we shall see, are something of an obsession for Anne Diamond.

16 June: Bernard Bresslaw has died, and as ever Anne has a personal recollection. "Some years ago," she reveals, "he sat on the TV-am sofa with Nick Owen and me."

23 June: A beautiful girl has died of anorexia. Again, Anne has her own angle on the story: "In *Good Morning*, we recently... made a series of films about the destructive female obsession with self-image."

30 June: Martyn Lewis has been offered a job on *Breakfast News*. This prompts Anne to remind us that "I did breakfast TV for six years".

7 July: Dr Hilary Jones, a television doctor, has been having an affair. "The fact is, we women are a pushover when it comes to doctors. Show us a man in a white coat and we go all wobbly." And she should know: "I've worked on quite a few TV programmes with an assortment of TV doctors..."

14 July: A dramatic change of policy. Anne rebukes Dr Hilary Jones for "flaunting his stethoscope and his sexuality", and blames his employers: "It was stupid of GMTV to launch the man as a sex symbol." "Dishy doctors" are, she thinks, "a liability".

21 July: Further proof of Anne's celebrity: she was invited to Jeffrey Archer's summer party in Grantchester for "the Great and the Good". The talk, she reveals, was all of the raunchy Dr Hilary Jones. "Can this man hold on to his job? Opinions were split between the sexes. The men thought that he was, commercially, an even greater asset. The women were absolutely opposed." Even a certain woman who only a month ago was drooling over sexy *Good Morning* doctor Mark Porter? Apparently so.

28 July: John Major's off-camera remarks about "bastards" have been leaked, and our columnist is on hand with expert advice. "Anyone in broadcasting" — such as, say, Anne Diamond — "knows that a microphone is NEVER switched off unless you've unplugged it yourself."

4 August: Les Dawson has died, leaving a nine-month-old daughter. "It's so sad that fate was to part them," she observes, revealing that she interviewed Les only a few months ago.

25 August: News from the home front. "My little baby, Jake, had a tummy bug this week."

8 September: Another domestic excitement: "It's been lump-in-the-throat time for me as I waved another little one off to Big School for the first time."

22 September: The life of a media megastar is always busy. "I was at the satellite TV awards the other night," Anne boasts.

29 September: Another scoop: "I'm on *The Big Breakfast* today with my mate Nick Owen."

6 October: The brainiest men do DIY around the house, a survey claims. But not all men are good at putting up shelves, according to Anne. "Take my mate Nick Owen..." She has other famous friends, incidentally: Frank Bruno "was one of the first on the phone with congratulations when I gave birth in May. (Funnily enough, so was Chris Eubank.)"

13 October: Anne is beside herself with excitement at the fact that Teena Sams, wife of the kidnapper Michael Sams, agreed to sit "on our *Good Morning* sofa to be interviewed". Better still, Michael Sams's victim Stephanie Slater was there too — "in our TV studio"!

27 October: "I started yesterday with a sense of shock and total disbelief. I had a horrific vision of my four-year-old son sitting unhappily in a school room staring at a blackboard with the words 'penis' and 'vagina'..." This nightmare was provoked by the launch of a new booklet about sex education in schools. She waxes lyrical: "I don't want Jamie in the innocent rose-glow of his precious childhood to be burdened by the weighty concepts of sex."

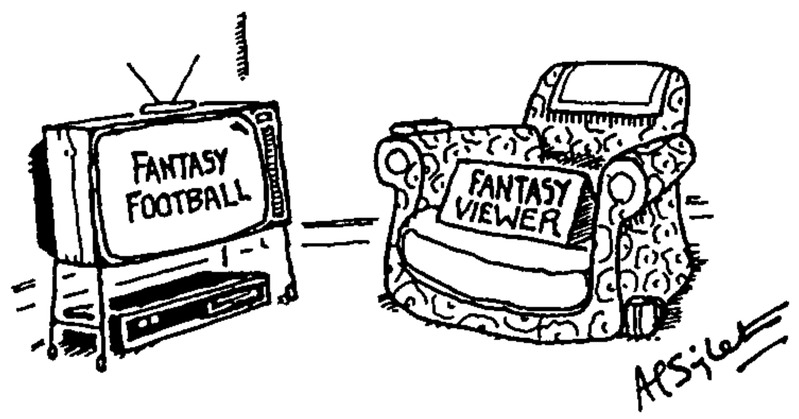
17 November: For the benefit of new readers, Anne announces that she is "a TV presenter working in live, topical programming". But she is also "a mum". Got it?

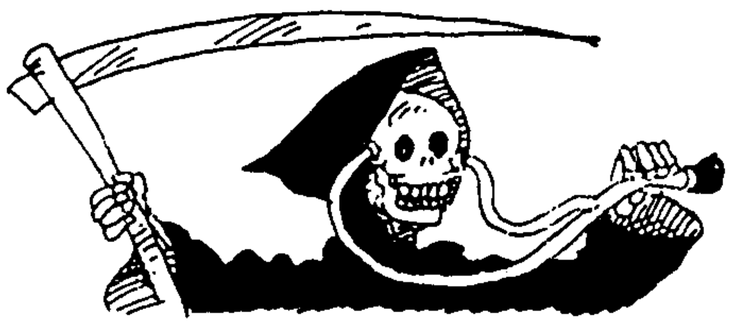
8 December: "Fame is a bewitching drug — and anyone in the public eye knows that there's only one thing strong enough to ward off its most sinister effects. And that's a down-to-earth family life. And lots of love." This is true of Anne, and also of "my mate Nick Owen".

22 December: An update on the family. "One of my little boys was Joseph in the school nativity tableau."

19 January: Back from holiday, Anne offers "a quick hello to the lovely lady I met at the Marks and Spencer checkout in Birmingham. Usually, people mention seeing me on TV but this lady said she looked forward to reading me in the *Daily Mirror*." Super.

2 February: Kids: don'tcha love 'em? "My son and his schoolfriends" have been comparing the ages of their respective mums. "How they let you down!" she sighs fondly. But a mum can never stop worrying. "I defy any parent who watched this week's *Panorama* not to have rushed to check whether the kids sleep too close to the electricity meter... If it is ever proven that electricity, in certain forms or circumstances, can give our children cancer, what do we all do then?" Consult a TV doctor, presumably — and then write another column about it.





DOING THE ROUNDS

NEIL McCALLEY, a respected divisional director of Westcountry ambulance service NHS trust (WAST), has resigned over a planned reorganisation which will mean all emergency calls being controlled from a central HQ in Tiverton.

The closure of control rooms in **Exeter**, as well as **Cornwall** and **Somerset**, is likely to affect call-out times adversely, and 16 experienced control staff face the sack as new posts are tendered to those with no background in the ambulance service.

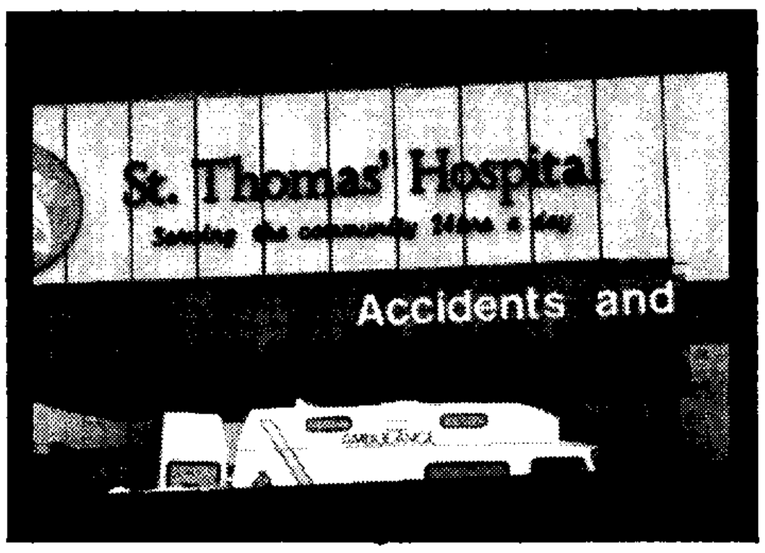
Last month **Plymouth and West Devon** ambulance staff and local GPs agreed a unanimous vote of no confidence in WAST chief executive David Green, who they claim is set to replace the emergency ambulance crew of a paramedic and a cardiac-trained technician with a paramedic and a driver. They are also angry that £100,000 has been spent on a quality assurance team rather than new equipment.

WAST's out-of-hours GP paging service has also run into trouble after its centralisation in Truro. GPs across the region are pulling out because of unacceptable delays. One man died after a delay in calling out GPs at **Chiddenbrook** surgery in **Crediton**. As Les Slade, ambulance control manager at Truro, put it: "We have had teething problems. Everything worked extremely well before we decided to centralise. We have been tremendously inundated by the workload and we have found a few blips in the system."

● **KINGSTON and Richmond health authority** recently met to discuss proposals from the **SW London Review Group** to close the casualty department and 400 beds, including the burns unit, at **Queen Mary's University hospital, Roehampton**.

As the meeting took place, the hospital was full and acutely ill patients were piling up in the casualty department. Staff tried to close the hospital to all but blue-light emergencies, but no other hospital could be found to provide cover. *Twenty four* hospitals were telephoned to ask if they could accept the six patients in casualty requiring emergency admission. **Ashford** hospital in **Middlesex** and **St Peter's, Chertsey,** took one each; **Ealing hospital** reported 17 patients of their own waiting in casualty and all the others were full. The remaining patients had to spend the night in casualty. Where they will go if the closures go ahead is unclear: perhaps Mrs Bottomley has room at her house?

● CONSULTANTS at the £1.5 million indebted **North Middlesex hospital** have been asked to take one week's unpaid leave before March... to help balance the books. Other targets for cuts include the occupational health service, the staff canteen (reduced to sandwiches only), group stress counselling and outpatient appointments. **Ilford's Redbridge health care trust,** £2.5 million in debt, has cancelled non-urgent operations since



November and is axing staff; **Merthyr's Prince Charles hospital** is losing £3 million a year; and in **Plymouth**, 450 hospital domestics, caterers and porters are set to lose their jobs in April. Since the election, the NHS has spent £100 million on staff redundancies and waiting lists have risen by 100,000.

● THE **Royal Liverpool University hospital** has cancelled orthopaedic outpatient appointments en masse: 170 patients, including a 17-year-old girl who has already waited nine months for an initial appointment, have been told there is little chance of being seen in the near future. And routine operations at **Worcester Royal Infirmary** have had to be cancelled due to a lack of beds. The predictable 17 percent rise in emergency admissions over the winter months has left the hospital with only one empty bed in medicine and surgery. As Jim Watts, chief executive of **Worcester and District health authority**, put it: "We are very worried indeed."

● GPs in **Barnet and Edgware** will have extra work on their hands after **Barnet health agency's** decision to close **Edgware hospital**. The closure is expected to save £19 million, although £14 million of this is already accounted for by debts. Nurses at **London's Royal Free hospital**, meanwhile, are feeling the strain after being asked to work 12-hour shifts. Some of the wards are so short of staff that nurses have to work through their meal breaks and some have taken time off sick. The average annual cost in sick leave to a hospital employing 500 nurses is £500,000.

● IN A confidence-inspiring move, the department of social security (DSS) has overlooked a bid from the NHS to give health checks to its staff for three years — and chosen BUPA instead! A spokeswoman said: "The NHS was involved but BUPA came out on top." Visitors to the Kremlin in **Leeds** (aka Quarry House) have thus found a BUPA mobile medical centre parked outside the joint NHS Management Executive and DSS headquarters.

● THE **Birmingham Children's hospital** application to become a fourth wave NHS trust has been "temporarily withdrawn due to technical reasons" by Mrs Bottomley. Loosely translated, the proposed closure of BCH (*Eyes passim*) would be very embarrassing were it to be a brand new trust.

● A BID by **St Lawrence's psychiatric hospital, Caterham**, part of the **Lifecare trust**, to move mentally handicapped people into two houses as part of the government's care in the community scheme has been blocked by Tory councillors. St Lawrence's is earmarked for closure in 1995 and the trust had hoped to convert houses in **Reigate's** affluent Alma Road and West Street to provide round the clock nursing for 26 patients. Despite support from the chief planning officer, the plans were voted out. As John Chiles (Con, Tadworth and Walton) said: "If we were to agree to this we would virtually be creating an institution. There would be no community element."

● CHRIS BOND, an employee in the marketing department of CLS Medical Ltd, tries to make a living selling vital equipment to an increasingly cost conscious NHS. Imagine his delight when he received a letter from S.M. Barnes, consultant in accident and emergency at **Dewsbury district hospital**, not placing an order but tapping him for sponsorship to enter a five-man team of consultants and managers into the 1994 Challengers Trophy in the Wye Valley. A pledge of up to £5,000 by the second week in February would guarantee a logo on uniforms and vehicles for the joyride.

M.D.

JOBS FOR THE BOYOS

PHILIP HEAD, former chief executive of the notorious Welsh Development Agency (WDA), has landed a plum job in another quango.

But as "property controller" for the Further Education Funding Council, how long will it be before lecturers find themselves teaching outdoors?

During Head's stint at the WDA, in which he languished in the shadow of "charismatic" chairman Dr Gwyn Jones, cock-ups and fraud cost the taxpayer more than £2 million.

Head failed to prevent thrice-convicted fraudster Neil Smith from becoming the agency's "marketing director", and he admitted to the parliamentary accounts committee (PAC) that a WDA employee had been paid off with £250,000 in return for a "vow of silence". Nice work if you're prepared to shut up about it.

Other "achievements" include a £2.3 million redundancy pay-off for 127 staff — a track record that qualifies him admirably to advise the 464 further education colleges in England on managing their £8 billion worth of assets.

"You KNOW when you've been quango'd!"

ENERGY NEWS

THE national audit office (NAO) has queried the huge proportion of the renewable energy budget spent on the experimental technology of hot dry rock (HDR) — but it only knows half the story.

A project to get heat from the core of the earth and pump it to the surface to drive power stations sounds like a good idea. But it has been an expensive (£42 million) flop, and will close at the end of next month.

The full story — or David Mellor's Folly — starts in 1980 when HDR was launched by Acord, the government's advisory council on research and development. It consisted of the cream of obedient academics and scientists, who solemnly announced that HDR would provide all the electricity we needed for up to 250 years without burning a nugget of coal — a nugget of misinformation used by Mellor, then energy under-secretary, to justify the government's abandonment of wave energy.

HDR meant drilling twin 6,000 metre boreholes at Camborne in Cornwall, pouring cold water down one and harvesting the scalding hot water that shot up the other. The energy department was delighted, and Mellor, explaining the government's decision to abandon work on wave energy, cited HDR as evidence of how sincere it was. We were to become world leaders in "this exciting development", he said, and that was why it was getting so much money.

It can now be revealed that a highly intelligent energy department press officer named Andrew Holmes originated a theory about this. He said the only conceivable explanation was that someone had a secret agenda... and intended to use the boreholes to dump nuclear waste.

This certainly sounded more plausible to energy watchers than the official explanation. The department was stuffed with nuclear fanatics — led by John Guinness, the last permanent secretary, who left to become chairman of BNFL. The identity of the press officer — the one man in the department who dared apply reason to official policy — can be disclosed because he died three months ago.

Whether his suspicion was well-founded is unknown because all attempts to find a safe way of burying nuclear waste, in Cornwall or anywhere else, have come to nothing because of the problems it arouses. As to wave energy, which Mellor contemptuously dismissed, it is about to take to the open sea with a device called the Osprey, stationed outside Dounreay, which was once destined to be the site of the fast breeder reactor. The latter, now abandoned, received tens of millions in government money. The Osprey received virtually no government support.

EDUCATION

MICHAEL PORTILLO's absurd recent speech to students at Southampton university highlighted the danger "in any other country" of buying exam qualifications. Among "other countries", the chief secretary to the treasury plainly included Wales, and the recent scandal there about buying degrees.

The department of philosophy at University College Swansea has just emerged from a four-year battle over a new degree course in medical ethics. Without their work being properly examined, degrees were handed out to anyone who paid the necessary entrance fees. In more than one case successful entrants copied out large sections of their theses from textbooks.

When three lecturers protested, they were suspended, while for four years the college authorities stuck by the course. In the end (see *Eye* 829), a privy council report by a retired judge, Sir Michael Davies, backed the lecturers, who have been reinstated. The college principal has retired.

The Davies report is an interesting summary of the way Thatcherite values have led to the buying and selling of educational qualifications. Will it be published? Portillo's cabinet colleague Tony Newton has been sitting on the report for nine months and greets demands for publication with a resounding "won't say".

SALLY DEEDES

JOHN GUMMER has announced — late in the day — that there should be a curb on the building of out-of-town hypermarkets because they kill off life in town centres. Just such a blight has fallen on the small "market" town of Alton, Hampshire.

On 19 January, a new "inner relief road" was opened. In its first week, shopkeepers in Alton's High Street reported takings down by 50 percent. On the first market day since the opening, stallholders were extremely lonely as perplexed shoppers gave up trying to reach the market.

But in straitened times, how did East Hampshire district council pay for the new road? It didn't. In an act of altruism, J. Sainsbury paid for it. The road, which just happens to pass Sainsbury's year-old "superstore", was hailed by Alton's mayor, Jeann Mann, as "the scheme that will solve the traffic problems that Alton has faced for years".

In the mind of many locals, there never was a problem. True, in the "rush hour" it may have taken 10 minutes to drive through the town as opposed to five. But the town has six off-street car parks — all within two minutes walk of the High Street — so parking was not a problem. In addition, the town is efficiently by-passed by the A31.

While the lucky residents may have a dying town centre, they will have no trouble finding the exciting new branch of Sainsbury's.

SINCE British Telecom introduced charges for directory inquiries — you pay 45p whether you get the information you want or not — the "service" has deteriorated rapidly.

True, it gives straightforward numbers quickly and efficiently. But if you have a number that requires a bit of searching, you may not be so lucky.

Within a half-hour period last week, one reader asked for the number of the National Health Service's new HQ in Leeds and was given a prescription office in Wakefield. Asking for BT's own headquarters in London, a number was given for Croydon. Not only does the punter pay for the inquiry, but he or she also pays for the subsequent abortive call. And if the number is ex-directory — in some areas more than 40 percent are — the punter is also charged for being told the number cannot be disclosed.

Why do inquiry calls amount to nine units and not a round 10? Because only calls of 10 or more units are included in the itemised phone bill, and at nine units you never notice how much you are being charged.

JUST FANCY THAT

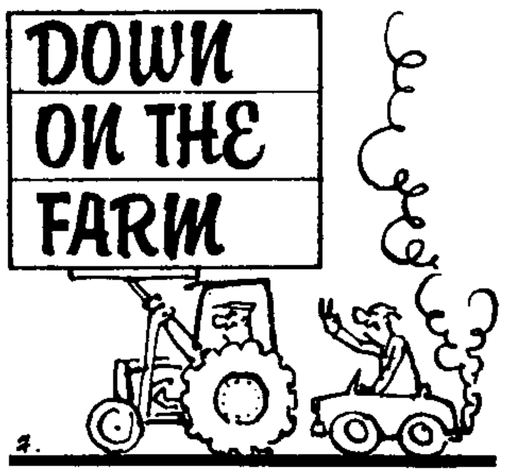
THE TART & TOAD RESTAURANT
The Old Brewery
Angel Place, Worcester

Worcester Evening News 24.1.94

THE TARTAN TOAD RESTAURANT
The Old Brewery
Angel Place, Worcester

Worcester Evening News 25.1.94

"Yo! Gimme none!"



with 'New Muckspreader'

THE antics of the ministry of agriculture, fisheries and food — aka the Maffia — continue to distress the farming community.

In mid-December, sheep farmers received notice of a "distribution of quota" from the national reserve, which had been promised the previous April. Despite its own eight-month delay, Maffia bosses demanded that all applicants obtain the official forms, which they were then given seven days to fill in.

Thus at a time when many were still on their Christmas break, farmers had to support their applications with evidence from holidaying accountants and local councils.

In Wales, meanwhile, after the enforced rush to submit "sheep annual premium applications" on pain of loss of subsidy for any delay, the Taffia — the Welsh branch of the Maffia family — is creating dire financial problems for already impoverished sheep farmers by delays in making subsidy payments.

Officials blame the EC agricultural reforms and computer problems, but like the proverbial playground bully, when they make a cock-up every excuse is valid and no mercy is shown to those in their power.

The Maffia's behaviour — and its chaotic administration of the IACS forms (*Eye* 827) — is now being compared to Mao's treatment of Chinese peasant farmers during the cultural revolution. Then, "arbitrary orders rained down, causing chaos in the countryside". Sound familiar?

A SHIVER ran down the spines of cattle rearers and dairymen after a Channel Four Despatches documentary sought to reactivate the "mad cow" BSE scare with its report on the 16-year-old girl allegedly dying of the human equivalent of BSE, Creutzfeldt Jakob Disease, or CJD.

The trouble with pinning her illness on beefburgers, as did the mad cow professor, Richard Lacey, is that by the time they are 16 virtually every child in Britain will have eaten huge numbers of them. And not all will have been force-fed by a paternal drittsekk, as befell the daughter of former agriculture minister John Gummer at the height of the 1989 BSE scare.

The frequency of beefburgers in the adolescent diet rules out any possibility of a significant link, even if it does allow the doom-mongers full reign for their unproved theories. Even so, Lacey and friends need to be careful because the poor child is not dead yet. As any respectable pathologist will tell you, there are a number of conditions which mimic CJD and that can only be positively diagnosed by post-mortem examination.

The real trouble with the ambulance-chasing style of the Despatches programme was that it carried the debate no further, locking in to the infected feed theory of BSE causation, which even the Maffia is having increasing difficulty in supporting. One area it is hoped that medical researchers will explore, should this child be confirmed as a CJD sufferer, is her work at the kennels, which she apparently enjoyed so much, and her possible exposure to pesticides.

NOTABLY, the Maffia frontman and apologist for the continuing epidemic of BSE on the *Despatches* programme was *Gruppenführer* Victor Meldrum, the government's chief vet.

Sporting a fresh scar on his nose, not incompatible with the effects of an angry egg producer venting his feelings, he ran the party line to the hilt. But the physical scar is nothing to the damage done to Victor by the press complaints commission (PCC).

Meldrum had sought support from his *Obergruppenführer*, a Mr R.J. Packer, the Maffia's permanent secretary who is known to a widening circle of the disaffected as the *ocean-going shit*, in objecting to an article in the *Sunday Torygraph* which questioned his competence to advise the otherwise invisible agriculture minister, Gillian Shephard, on the safety of nerve-gas based organophosphorous pesticides.

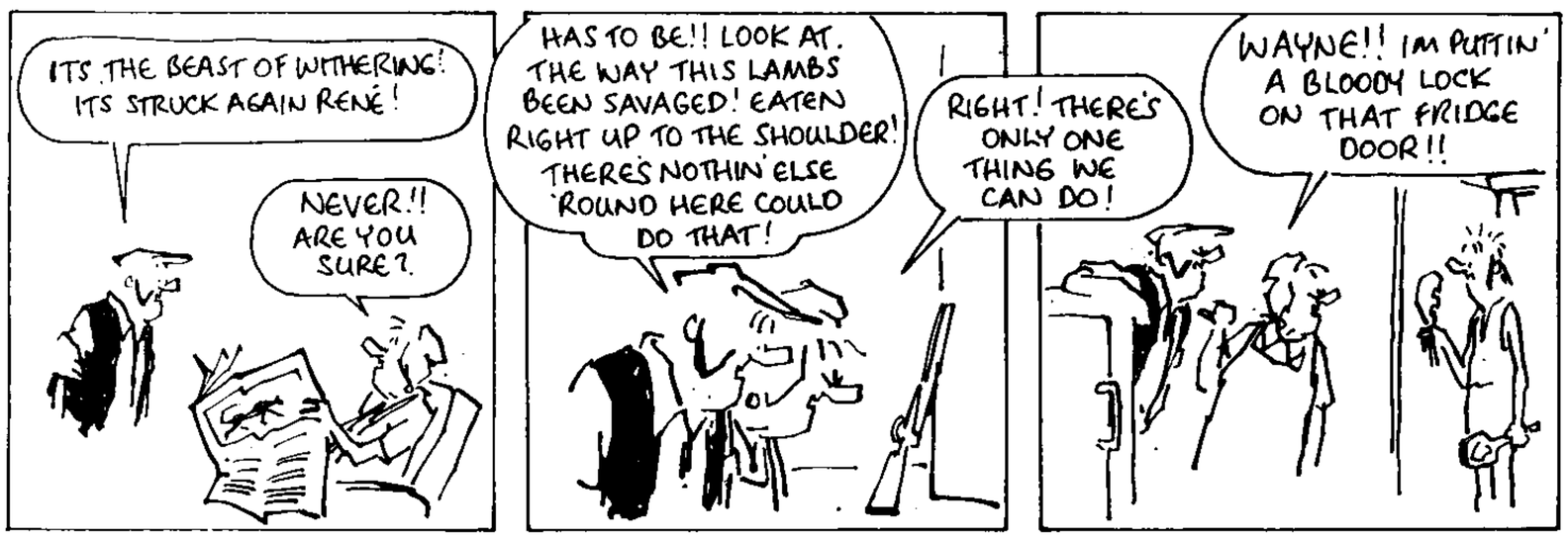
Offered an apology by the *Torygraph* if he could confirm that Meldrum had nothing to do with the advice, Packer refused to accept it and persisted with his complaint, only to have it rejected by the PCC.

The funny thing is that when the Maffia called organic beef farmer, Mark Purdey, in to talk to some *real* scientists on his theory that BSE might be caused by pesticide exposure (*Eye* 828) the battered *Gruppenführer* was not present.

Perhaps Packer should have accepted the apology, thus avoiding his new soubriquet, the *egg* Packer, after the stuff now covering his face.

Old Macdonald

ALBERT


ITS THE BEAST OF WITHERING! ITS STRUCK AGAIN RENÉ!
NEVER!! ARE YOU SURE?
HAS TO BE!! LOOK AT. THE WAY THIS LAMBS BEEN SAVAGED! EATEN RIGHT UP TO THE SHOULDER! THERES NOTHIN ELSE 'ROUND HERE COULD DO THAT!
RIGHT! THERES ONLY ONE THING WE CAN DO!
WAYNE!! IM PUTTIN' A BLOODY LOCK ON THAT FRIDGE DOOR!!

NOOKS and CORNERS

SO THE dowdy collection of freemasons and financial wizards who run the poor CofE and who have somehow lost millions of the church commissioners' assets now propose closing and disposing of 24 City churches.

The reason is simple: the City churches are well endowed, and if lots are closed others can get their hands on all that lovely money. This is why nobody in the church intends to rebuild St Ethelburga's Bishopsgate, bombed by the IRA — and why St Helen's, Bishopsgate, wants to annex the parish so it can use its endowment to pay for Quinlan Terry's iconoclastic proposals (now largely approved, I'm sorry to say) to turn a rich and complex medieval building into a Puritan conventicle (*Eyes passim*).

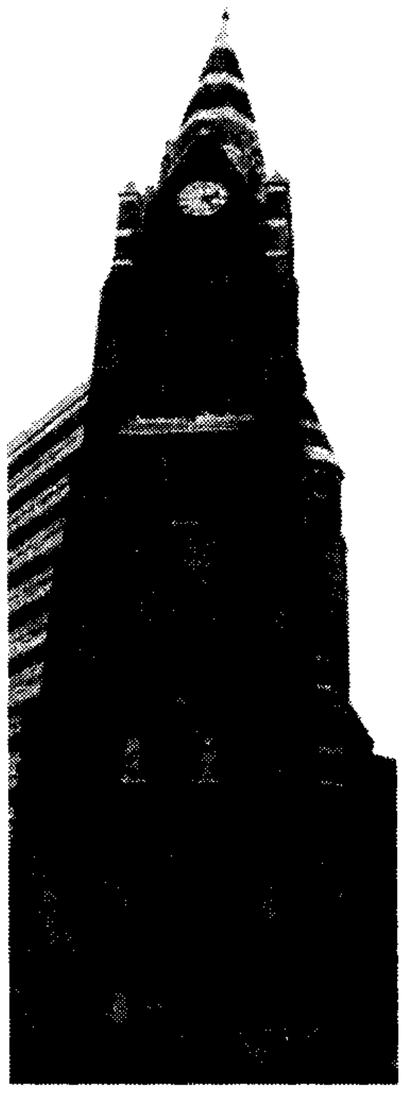
But most of the victims of Lord Templeman's obliging commission set up by the Bishop of London are the surviving churches by Sir Christopher Wren, the one architect most City gents have heard of but whose legacy in the City is consistently undervalued. As the following quotations show, we have all, in a sense, been here before.

"My clear feeling is that it would be a sordid, nay, sinful piece of barbarism to do other than preserve these churches as precious heirlooms; many of them specimens of noble architecture, the like of which we have no prospect of ever being able to produce in England again."

Or: "The Fire of London in 1666 coincided by a miracle with the existence of England's greatest architect, Sir Christopher Wren. And it happens therefore that the greatest single group of buildings in England, a group which ranks English architecture beside the whole achievement of the Continent outside Greece and Italy, consists precisely of those classical churches for which our Philistine hierarchy is imbued with such hatred... The London churches are not well attended, and it is not difficult, therefore, for the Church to mask its spleen against them by pretending that, if their sites were sold, the money could be used for the founding of churches elsewhere. [The] Bishop of London, has enjoyed the emoluments of his diocese for [many]. One might suppose that in such a period he would have developed an affection, or at least a simulation of gratitude, towards the city that has cherished him and listened to him with such patience. Not he! In 1919 this prelate decided of his own wisdom to abolish nineteen of the City Churches in a simultaneous holocaust... Dr Winnington-Ingram's proposal, however, was too much even for a nation of shopkeepers. Thanks to the efforts of the London Society, opinion for once grew articulate, and the scheme was quashed by Parliament in 1926 on a petition from the Corporation of London."

And again: "As the noise and reek of diesel oil in the streets grow greater, and as the impersonal slabs of cellular offices rise higher in the sky, so do the churches which remain in the city of London today become more valuable to us." So wrote John Betjeman, revered founder of this column, in his little book on *The City of London Churches* in 1967.

But my first quote comes from Thomas Carlyle, on the occasion of William Morris founding the SPAB in 1877; and the second is from Robert Byron's *How We Celebrate the Coronation* (of 1937). So in proposing to get rid of these churches, Dr David Hope, Bishop of London, is in a long and noble tradition of philistinism and cynicism.

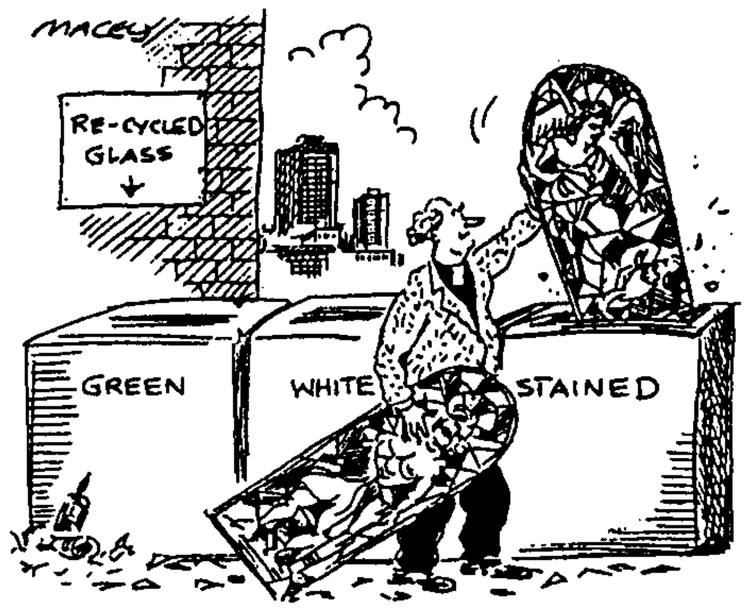


AT LEAST some of the steeples of destroyed City churches still stand. Towers and spires are important as landmarks, as relics, as reminders. One such is that of St Peter's Battersea, a Victorian church by William White which made a jolly bonfire on Guy Fawkes night in 1970.

A miserable hut, serving as a place of worship, now stands on the site. But the tall brick steeple, designed by White and built in 1911, still stands, towering over Clapham Junction. It is a rare symbol of Christianity and a powerful landmark in the dreary wastes of Battersea.

So naturally it is threatened with demolition. Much of the brickwork is in poor condition and scaffolding now surrounds it. The repair bill is some £250,000. But, recognising its importance, English Heritage is prepared to offer a substantial grant towards the repair of this listed structure. And two years ago a scheme for a new church designed by (of all people) Michael "Twee" Blee, envisaged incorporating the steeple into the new building.

Yet the Rev Michael Wilmshust, vicar of St Peter's and St Paul's, seems determined that it should go. "We are devastated. It breaks my



heart to let it go but one can't live in a dream world." In fact, he is so devastated that he has asked English Heritage and Wandsworth council to "put their money where their mouth is" (sic) and is using "ecclesiastical exemption" and seeking to obviate the normal route of a demolition order and listed building consent by asking the chancellor of the diocese to authorise an "instrument" to get the tower down quickly.

Why? It is well known that go-ahead clergy loathe "ecclesiastical plant" of any prominence or aesthetic distinction. Besides, Mr Wilmshurst didn't like the scheme to rebuild the church. What better than to eliminate all evidence that there was once a fine Gothic fane in Clapham Junction?

'Piloti'

In our last Haute-Couture Collection, embroideries had been made of what was believed to be a "love poem in memory of a Maharani". We have since been informed that we had unknowingly reproduced verses from the Koran. We would like to officially apologise to the Islamic community and to let it be made known that we have destroyed the dresses thus embroidered as well as all the negatives of the photos taken of these dresses. We would ask all the photographers, reporters and cameramen present on January 15th 1994 to kindly return their negatives to us or to solemnly swear that they will destroy them and in no case use them.

Chanel press announcement

Let us not be discreet about it: Andrew Motion has turned 40 and still looks like the Angel Gabriel. This is not, of course, by any coy design of his own. His roots have grown out of winter-dark as is the way with natural blonds, a pair of rimless spectacles such as an accountant might wear front the lobelia eyes and the aquiline nose is all snotted by some strictly non-ethereal bacteria, yet when he looks at you (as he does, but only rarely) and says Yes, you get a definite frisson of immaculate conception.

SALLY VINCENT
Sunday Times Magazine

He [Harry Nilsson] was a good guy. A considerate guy. A good guy to be around. It was a confusing time and we made each other more confused. We thought about music. The

Pseuds Corner

records we made were like we hadn't heard rock 'n' roll, like the Rolling Stones didn't exist. We thought rock would go in a completely different direction, like a branch of Homo sapiens who didn't become Homo sapiens.

RANDY NEWMAN
Independent

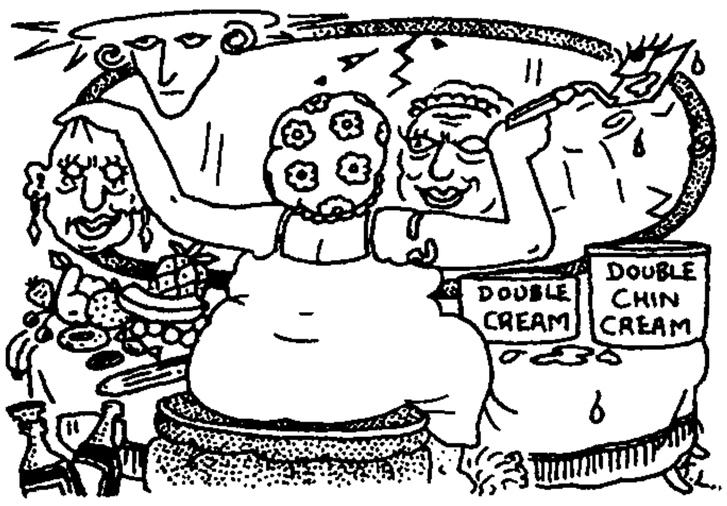
GLASTONBURY TOR MAZE RITUAL WALK IN TWO PARTS: This ritual walk is in two parts — into the Maze on January 31st taking 3-4 hours. Then 2-3 days spent metaphorically in the centre of the labyrinth in contemplation. Out of the Maze on February 3rd taking 2-3 hours.

The University Of Avalon,
"Experiencing Avalon Week"

Tolstoy reminds me of Peter Beardsley, because although there is that specific virtuosity on the small scale with Beardsley, where he swings the hips, beats three men and scores the goal, there is also that play-making element which is over the whole match, which you can relate to Tolstoy's paragraphs of virtuosity and total vividness contributing to, or rather because of the integrity of the whole work.

ROBERT McLIAM WILSON
Varsity

Taking off my make-up before I go to bed is also rather frightening. It takes me a very long time. And then I trowel on the various night creams. This is as



much a ritual as my morning and evening prayers to Isis — I belong to a very obscure and secret branch of her religion which involves a lot of eating and drinking.

LYNN PICKNETT (Paranormal Agony Aunt)
The Independent

CONTRIBUTORS: A.Brown, Everyone, J.Holmes, D.& B. Carron, N.Greenslade, C.Armstrong.

£10 paid for entries

Letters

Thanks for the memory

Sir,

Poor old Sir Ken Warren, our beloved ex-chairman, must be suffering from amnesia (Letters, 28 January 1994).

Has he forgotten all the votes that took place on the amendments put forward by Labour and Liberal Democrat members of the trade and industry select committee, which were voted upon on party lines and very often defeated on the casting vote of himself as chairman?

Has he forgotten the evidence from officials and ministers to the supergun inquiry, which, day by day, the Scott inquiry shows to be untrue?

Has he forgotten that he met one key witness the night before he gave evidence, for a quiet chat?

Has he forgotten the Labour amendment which said "it seems hardly credible that a large military project such as Babylon (the Supergun series) would not have been known to British and other intelligence services...) Ken Warren used his casting vote against that one, too.

Arise Sir Ken, but the real honours lie elsewhere. But, PRIVATE EYE *beware. Whitehall's whitewash bucket is still overflowing.*

Perhaps in order to refresh his memory Sir Ken should use the report for bedtime reading.

Yours sincerely,
DOUG HOYLE MP,
JIM COUSINS MP,
London SW1.

Visiting rights

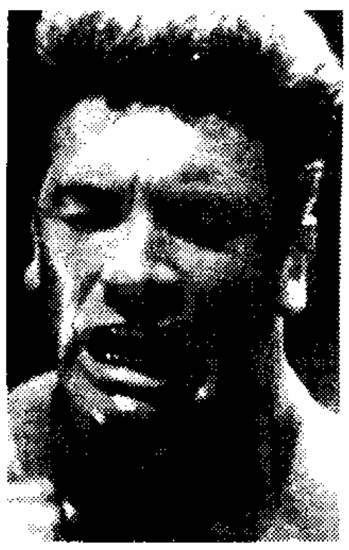
Sir,

In the same week that you published an article "exposing" financial troubles at the East Grinstead Church of Scientology, we paid over £600,000 cash for a new building for our staff accommodation. And following the US government's recent recognition of full charity status and religious bona fides of the church (meaning financial records became more publicly accessible) international media wires excitedly ran a story of US $400,000,000 assets. So what?

My only point is this: there is not much value in "information" about Scientology obtained covertly by ye olde "reliable sources". These silly old coots are fighting a cold war that doesn't exist. The best way to find out about something is to look for yourself. If your readers are interested in Scientology they are more than welcome to come and visit.

Sincerely,
PETER MANSELL,
Church of Scientology, East Grinstead.

Lookalike



Portillo

Operaman

Sir,

There is a striking resemblance between 'Operaman' (as recently featured on the Guardian's weekly Guide) and Michael Portillo. Perhaps they are long-lost relatives. I think Mr Portillo should be told.

A. MOSTYN-OWEN,
London W14.

Amazingly sad letter

Sir,

We have just become aware of an article in PRIVATE EYE, *dated 17 January 1994, entitled Doing The Rounds, in which the following is stated:*

"A freezing, noisy portakabin was later erected to serve this purpose."

I am writing to point out that "Portakabin" is a registered trade mark of this company, which may be used only to describe buildings manufactured by Portakabin Limited. It is not a generic term and in order to protect our rights to the exclusive use of the Mark, we must take active steps to discourage its use as a generic term. I have been advised that the building at Wansbeck General Hospital is not a genuine Portakabin unit.

I should therefore be obliged, that, if in future should any mention of portable buildings be necessary, these are referred to as such or by some similar term. There can then be no possibility of error.

I do assure you that this is of considerable importance to us and would be most grateful for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,
PM KAY,
Trade Marks Officer, Portakabin Limited, York.

FOR 13 years, one man has made *The Sun* shine each day.

Today, Editor Kelvin MacKenzie moves on to a new challenge.

Genius is said to be one per cent inspiration, ninety-nine per cent perspiration.

With Kelvin, it is the other way round.

His vitality, vision and instinct for a story have made *The Sun* what it is today:

Britain's best-selling paper by a mile.

On behalf of 11 million readers, we say to Kelvin:

Thank you, my Sun.

Sun Leader

Submitted by John Matthews

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Car alarms

Sir,

Re HP Sauce, EYE *838. We were interested to see that Chris Smith's environmental credentials were spoilt by some awkward sod's question about Thorp, because the same thing, mutatis mutandis, happened at a meeting of this organisation (All London Against the Roads Menace) at the House of Commons on 14 December last.*

Chris Smith took the familiar "trust us, everything will be better under Labour" stance... "A moratorium on road building... a review... consultation... a move away from 14-lane super-highways". The Labour party was entirely on our side.

But when asked whether we could now quote him as saying Labour would stop building roads in London and use the money to renovate public transport, he got very indignant and started storming out.

To be fair, Simon Hughes (Lib-Dem environment shadow) was also "on our side" but, when asked the same question, said very firmly "no".

So... poor old London. We have three parties all favouring a vast (£5 billion) road-building programme in London, and, at the same time, all as green as green — sickly, ain't it?

Yours truly,
NINA TUCKMAN,
London N19.

The write stuff

Sir,

Re: "Yankee Doodle not so dandy" YEO *837*

As a so-called "Yankee" I take great exception to the not-so-subtle indictment of the reading tastes of the entire American people contained in the first four paragraphs of this Literary Review. Lovers of good books are found in all countries, the United States included. Perhaps the author of the aforementioned review should embark on a "fact-finding" tour of the United States and include visits to some of our excellent bookstores (yes, we do have such establishments here) with names like Barnes & Noble, Waldenbooks and others here in New England with many more in our other 49 states. The shelves of such stores are lined with everything from Shakespeare to Dickens, as well as Charles Ross, Jasper Ridley, Lady Antonia Fraser, John Galsworthy, Barbara Cartland, Jean Plaidy and James Herriott, as well as Jeffrey Archer (to name several of my own favourites). I'm sure Michael Dobbs will soon join them.

Thank you.
LISA A. McCARTHY,
Massachusetts, USA.

Anagram

Sir,

How apt that an anagram of GILLIAN TAYLFORTH (EASTENDERS *"head" soap queen) should be LYING AT ORAL FILTH.*

Yours pancreatically,
WES TEALING.

Butcher's meet counter

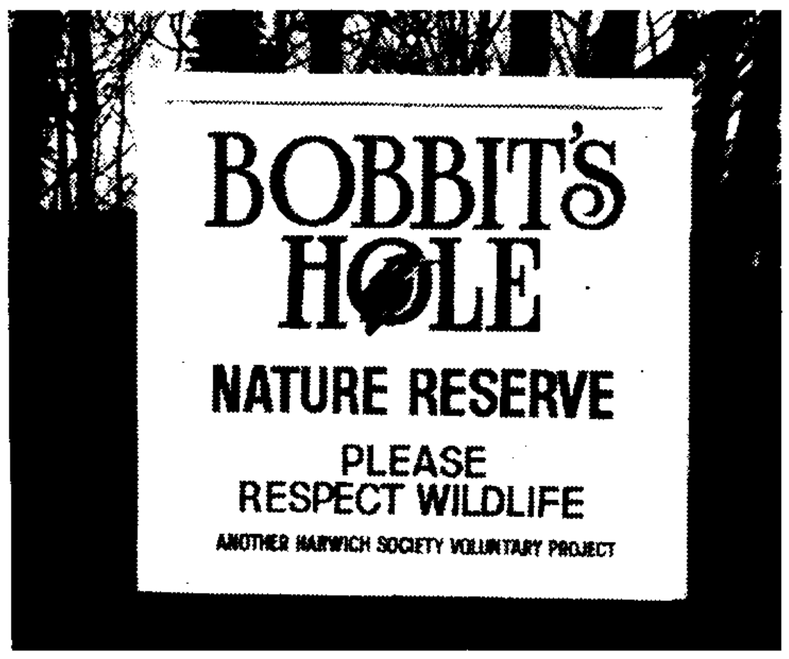
Sir,

Your colour section of the last EYE *rightly stated that many prominent Tories visited Baghdad in the 1980s. You mentioned the late Robert Adley; Nick Budgen and Tony Marlow, you could also add to the list the foreign secretary Douglas Hurd (then a foreign office minister) who visited Saddam in 1981 to court the "Butcher of Baghdad". You could also have added that after the genocidal gassing of the Kurds in 1988 trade minister Tony Newton flew out with 20 British officials and offered the "Butcher of Baghdad" £340 million of British trade credit.*

"Gorgeous" George Galloway's choice of words may have been a little unfortunate but he is right when he says that the sanctions against Iraq should be lifted — after all, the Iraqi people cannot be held responsible for the actions of a leader who not only they did not elect but who was actually placed in power with the help of the western intelligence services when they supplied him with a hit list of opponents.

Yours sincerely,
PAUL O'HANLON,
Cheshire.

I-SPY



Submitted by Paul Mansell. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

The Late Show

Sir,

With regard to your lookalike — Brian Redhead and Socrates — I wish you hadn't.

Yours,
MRS C. HARVARD,

Suffolk.

Loss and fund department

Sir,

I read, not in the EYE, *critics are the people who come on to the battlefield to shoot the wounded. What I find wounding is your description of me in* EYE *826 as "disgraced arts impresario Victoria Charlton".*

When I became co-chairman of the Entertainment Corporation ten years ago, Gresham House (80%) owners agreed with me we could present the best in performing arts without the usual grants which sustain the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal Opera House etc. That blockbuster companies such as the Bolshoi and the Kirov would earn enough to underwrite the less known performers.

In the medium term we were right. So what went wrong? One Bolshoi tour showed £1.8 million profit, but most years we broke even. First came the Gulf war, fewer people went to the theatre, especially in the USA, where we had two companies touring, then came the recession. We lost money, not £10 million as the EYE *reported but £1.3 in the UK, and £3.5 in the USA.*

In our ten-year of life we breached the cultural iron curtain, bringing the Russian ballet back to the west, and the Royal Ballet and ENO, to Russia.

We innovated the low priced mass audience venue with the Bolshoi Tent season (from £3 a seat). We also raised substantial funds for charities.

Naturally I would have preferred to have made a profit for shareholders of which I was one. However, there are now thousands of people (east and west) who enjoyed, through the Entertainment Corporation, the very best in the performing arts. Of that I am quite proud.

Yours sincerely,
VICTORIA CHARLTON,
(Walking wounded!)

Chairman, Derngate Trust, London W14.

Under dung

Sir,

Regarding Knowsley's hole, 125,000 tonnes of rubbish a day!

Sounds like a load of shit to me!

Yours faithfully,
DR A MOORCROFT

Cleveland.

Coke and dagger

Sir,

I believe your now defunct Ad Nauseam feature was inspired by someone comparing events in a Coke advert to uncannily similar events in the film DON'T LOOK NOW *(*EYE *767).*

It might interest ex-adherents of this column to know that some other genius with a soft-drinks contract has finally got the message that plagiarism pays. But this bod has managed to go one better (that is, if the word "better" can ever be applied to theft).

For in the latest Tango commercial a hapless onlooker is menaced by a knife-wielding lady-dwarf in a red plastic mac. This isn't so much forging Roeg's above-mentioned masterpiece, it's simply photocopying it.

Rock-bottom! With an iota more imagination they could have had Donald Sutherland doing the voice-over.

Yours faithfully,
KAY VINAITCH,

Knotty Ash.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"He [Peter Swales] has now got a scapegoat to hang his hat on."
FRANCIS LEE, BBC1
(A.B. Stirrup)

"Bruce, on his right foot, is still running..."
ALAN GREEN, Radio 5
(Christina Giscombe)

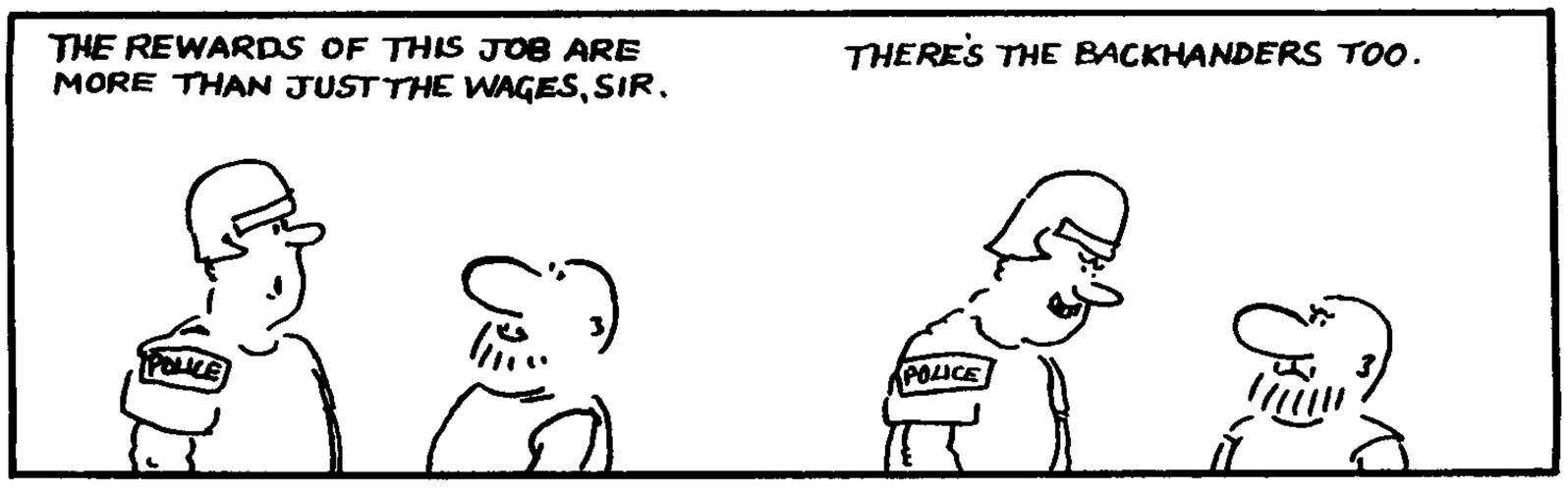
Jeremy Isaacs: *You called your autobiography 'The Ragman's Son'. Who was the Ragman?*
Kirk Douglas: *My father.*
Late Show, BBC2
(P. Fitzpatrick)

"I've studied his lyrics note by note..."
GARY BARLOW (of Take That), BBC2
(Richard Jolley)

"Relentlessly the barometer climbs on the weathervane of serving for Stich."
JOHN BARRETT, BBC2
(Derek Robinson)

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN



Letter from Tehran

from Our Own Correspondent

WHICHEVER way he looks, president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani has problems.

He faces challenges from conservatives and radicals, and at the staid celebrations to mark the anniversary of Ayatollah Khomeini's return from exile, his speech was interrupted by five shots from a gunman.

They were wild shots — but a loud indication of popular frustration. For times are hard and getting harder. The lucky ones have two jobs and two salaries, but even so it is hard to get by as the cost of living rises relentlessly each month.

Many have no hope of jobs and the young often have no skills. Families get by with state-subsidised handouts of flour, rice and other bare necessities. These are our "oppressed" classes — Ayatollah Khomeini's much-praised *mostazafin* — the ordinary people who provided a million "martyrs" in the war with Iraq, and in whose name the Islamic revolution was made in 1979.

They are still waiting to see some benefit, and even their patience is running out as last year's riots in provincial cities showed. The government cannot afford riots in Tehran.

While our economy is in a mess, partly due to mismanagement by the state, the basic problem remains low oil prices, now less than $15 a barrel. Oil provides almost 90 per cent of our foreign earnings, and the shortfall is serious.

And while our "democratic" system does not allow political parties as such, factionalism flourishes. When the radicals were forbidden to march in Tehran on the anniversary of the taking of US embassy hostages, our one-time interior minister Ali Akbar Mohtashemi denounced Rafsanjani for causing "the fragrant flowers of the Islamic revolution to fade away".

"Death to America!" — the slogan of the revolutionary era — is still heard, but it sounds increasingly hollow. Our realists want to normalise relations with the "global Satan" but hardly know how to begin after 15 years of insults and recriminations. Washington, for its part, shows no sign of compromise with what it still insists is the world's leading "terrorist" state. If anything, the Clinton administration seems more determined than ever to isolate us. So Rafsanjani has the worst of both worlds: derided by radicals at home as "the American president" while kept at arm's length by Uncle Sam.

Relations with western Europe are also cool — not surprisingly after Khomeini's *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie and a series of brutal assassinations of Iranian exiles in Europe.

For cynicism and hypocrisy our rulers take some beating. Take the contrasting fortunes of Coca Cola and MacDonalds, the ultimate symbols of US "economic imperialism". Banned since the Islamic revolution back in 1979, Coca Cola is now back in business. The recent opening of MacDonalds' first branch in Tehran ended with a raid and the shutting down of the premises. The explanation is simple. The Coke concession is owned by our richest clerical family, controllers of the shrine of Iman Reza in Mashad. The MacDonalds concession is owned by a mere businessman.

While the mullahs lose what little confidence is left in their ability to run the country, and Rafsanjani, who always wears his mullah's robes and white turban, has lost much of the popularity that won him massive majorities and two presidential terms, we have few heroes left in public life.

One, however, is the mayor of Tehran, Gholam Hossein Karbaschey, who is a refreshing antidote to the pervasive inertia — and corruption — elsewhere.

He enjoys phenomenal popular support, and under his dynamic management rapid improvements are being made to Tehran's decayed, potholed roads. New city areas, proper roads, pavements and drainage works are being built, together with new parks, the money coming from taxing property developers.

Even so, Tehran is choked with traffic. Ten years on, we are still waiting for the first part of a Metro system to open. It is a painful symbol of our crushed hopes.

The grim guardian of our revolution may be dead, but his spirit lives on. Khomeini's gaudy shrine outside Tehran receives a steady stream of pilgrims. His prestige, though, will not be enough to save the regime from popular frustration and anger if the economy cannot be revived.

PORTILLO LASHES SELF

by Our Filthy Foreigners Staff
Xen O'Phobe

MR MICHAEL Portillo last night bitterly attacked himself in a speech given to the St Cake's Upper Remove Political Society, known as "Polsoc" (secretary: J. Archer Minor [Hodders]).

The Treasury Secretary told a packed dormitory of 13 boys who had been allowed to stay up for "late cocoa and philosophical debate" that all foreigners were "ghastly, greasy and corrupt".

"Just look at me," he said. "I am the proof of what I say."

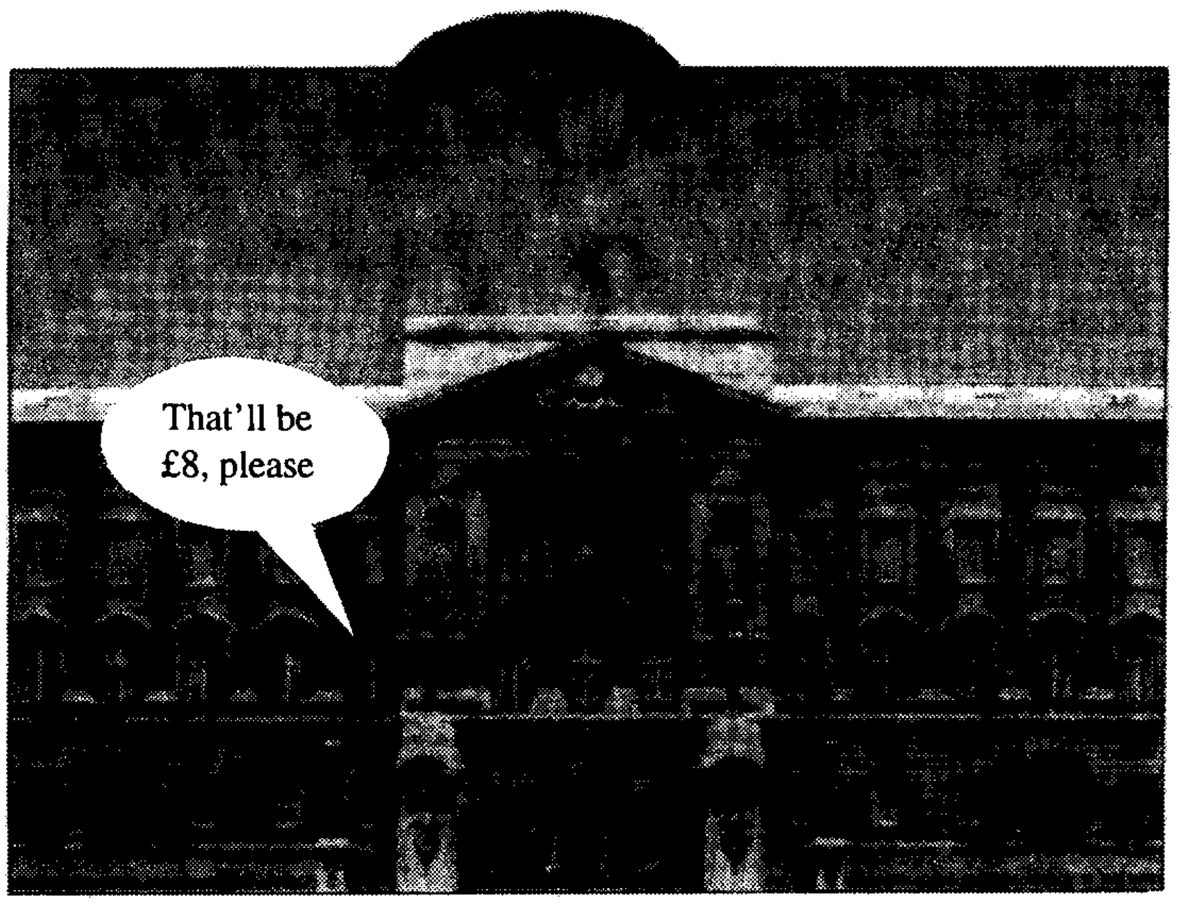
Piss Portillo

But later Mr Portillo was quick to apologise for any offence caused to himself, claiming: "It was an off-the-cuff remark made in the heat of the moment. I know this because I made the same off-the-cuff remark in the heat of the moment the day before to the Disraeli Club at St Biscuit's Preparatory School in Surrey."

Michael Portillo is Spanish.

"This is America, Goldilocks. We reserve the right to arm bears"

NUDE PARACHUTIST CHARGED



NEW FILM FINALLY RELEASED

by Our Cinema Staff
Edward '20th Century' Fox

THE controversial Guildford Four film has at last been released after months of being in the can.

Cheering crowds gathered outside the cinemas as the film, *In the Name of Money*, saw the light of day for the first time.

Making a Bomb

The film has caused huge controversy, as it has now emerged that much of it was "made up" by the producers. Large sections of the plot "have been blatantly fabricated" and inserted into the story and the sequence of events has been "deliberately altered" in order to sell it to American audiences.

The stars of the film, Emma Thompson and Daniel Day-Lewis, have however consistently pleaded their innocence.

"We just read out what was given to us and signed our contracts. We were frightened our parts would go to someone else."

Winter Olympics

Private Eye's Early Result Service

Women's Synchronised Ice Assault
Gold Emmy Lou Borgia *(USA)*
Silver Lindi-Jane Macbeth *(USA)*
Bronze Charlotta Manson *(USA)*

Mens Uphill Bobsleigh Slalom (Pairs)
Gold Neumann and Baadiel *(Austria)*
Silver Häle and Päsz *(Sweden)*
Bronze Reeves and Mortimer *(UK)*
(Delayed due to wrong kind of snow)

Men's Long Distance Ice Snooker
Bronze Chi Ta Lot *(China)*
Silver Chi Tsum Maw *(China)*
Gold Chi Ta Most *(China)*

Men's Underage Homosexual Acts *(shurely 'Figure Skating' Ed.)*

(Contd. p. 94)

Then...

...and Now

BMW coming in at 4 o'clock!
For you, Rover, ze trade war is over Heh! Heh!
LUFTHANSA
Aaargh! They've bought it!
ROVER
CONTRACT
We'll give Jerry a bloody good company!

FUNNY OLD WORLD

Compiled by
Victor Lewis-Smith

● "I do not blame the congregation for their actions," declared Mhlengi Ginindz from his hospital bed in Manzini. "They were only carrying out the Lord's will. I blame the brewery — there was too much yeast in the beer."

Ginindz told reporters how he had sustained his injuries at an all-night peace vigil: "After some beers in the sheeben, I entered the church and took my rightful place in the pew. But the beer was very bad, and it wreaked havoc inside my stomach, so I moved to the back of the church and, holding my cheeks apart so as not to cause offence, began farting quietly. I became drowsy and fell asleep, and the next thing I knew I was hanging upside down from a 'Jesus Our Saviour' banner, being bludgeoned by hysterical members of the Red Gown Zionist Sect. They said I had been farting during the lesson, and began hitting me with a large wooden cross. The priest then denounced me from the pulpit, saying that the devil must have sent me to drown out the word of God, because my farting was louder than the rumble of thunder. He told the congregation to drive Satan from his church, so they beat me with crucifixes, fractured my pelvis, broke both my legs, and rammed communion wafers up my nose with crayons from the Sunday school activity box. If I had not crawled outside and sheltered beneath the protective branches of an umhlanga tree, it could have been serious.

"And now they are claiming I was hit by a milk truck. Where is the truck? It is a lie. However, I will not prosecute. They are very devout in Manzini." *(The Times of Swaziland 16/9/93. Spotter — James Culverwell)*

— ● —

● *"So what if a few people are embarrassed?" Ze'ev Lichtenzon told reporters. "They'd be a damn sight more embarrassed if they got an exhaust pipe rammed up their tradesman's entrance."*

Lichtenzon was speaking after his advertising campaign provoked a storm of outrage across Tel Aviv. "I got pig sick of all the bad driving and traffic accidents in this city. It's been proved scientifically by me that most accidents are caused by men with penises less than five inches long and no self-control. That's why I rented 300 billboards to get my anti-machismo message across. ROWDY DRIVERS HAVE SMALL PENISES is one slogan, FAST DRIVERS ARE PREMATURE EJACULATORS is another, BIG CAR, SMALL MAN is a third. The most successful one so far is RESEARCH PROVES IT: TOO FAST ON THE ROAD, TOO FAST IN BED, with an automatic foam spurter fitted to it. I've been getting burning rags through my letterbox, so it's obviously doing the trick.

"Next, I'm going to target women. They're even worse drivers than the men. That's because they don't have any penises at all. It's all there in Freud." (The Jerusalem Post 10/1/94. Spotter — Barrie Dickinson)

— ● —

● "Y's Eyes shows ecologically aware sisters how they can make a wide range of environmentally-friendly products for themselves," a spokesman for the Auckland company told reporters. *"Gladrags* is our reusable, low-cost, healthy alternative to disposable menstrual protection, and you can sew them yourself from recycled materials by following our simple instruction sheet. Other leaflets show how to make facial cream from avocado and your own urine, how to disable and castrate a potential rapist, and how to prepare your placenta for the ancient Maori ritual of the afterbirth feast. The only complaints we've had have been about our logo — a dead sheep being recycled as a tampon for a whale. Un-Christian? My arse. We do not take drugs and we are affiliated to the YWCA." *(YWCA Auckland Women's Business/Trade Directory 1993/4. Spotter — Fay Pearce)*

PETER McLIE

ISN'T IT just pathetic the way some journalists can only write about Private Eye and how it isn't any good any more since they left?

I read such a piece only the other day written by myself, a man who left Private Eye seven years ago. Pathetic, isn't it?

Hasn't this journalist got anything else to write about? You wouldn't find yours truly doing such a thing? Oh no.

TEA leaves are a terrible menace, are they not? It's always hard to get them out of the pot when you are doing the washing up.

I have an idea. Why not create a small perforated container filled with tea leaves which could be placed inside the pot? There would be no mess and a fine and dandy cup of tea would be the result. What's more I have a name for it — The Filofax.

NORMAN Lamont has had a busy time recently. He called John Major "weak and hopeless." Yet there he is, still in the Cabinet. It makes you think that Norman may have been right all along. Why does no-one get sacked anymore? Even when they are manifestly not up to the job?

(Great stuff. A.N.)

Correction

The Archer wishes to apologise to readers for its mispelling of the word 'amaryllis' in its last month's Gardening column. The mistake printing two "m's" instead of one was caused by a typing error which was not spotted by our production department. As a result, the Lauradale Road neighbour of the column's writer who provided the information has refused to submit any information this month so there is no Gardening column. This paper wishes to apologise to him and any other reader for any offence caused.

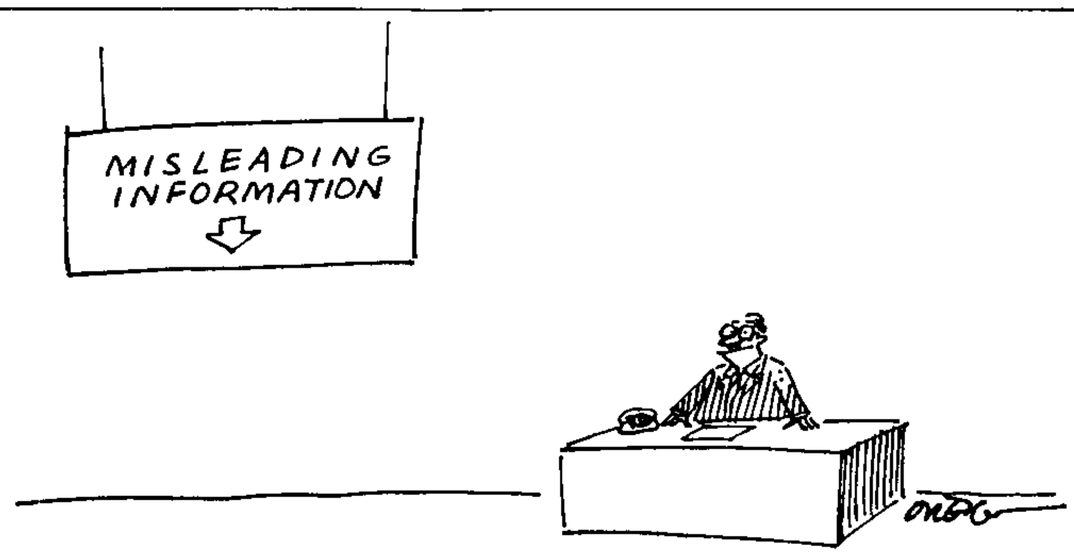
The Archer

THOSE CATHOLIC CONSPIRATORS IN FULL

We name the men who are trying to take over Britain with secret funds supplied by the Vatican.

1. Lord Rees-Mogg
2. Paul Johnson
3. Auberon Waugh
4. Guy Fawkes
5. Titus Oates
6. Piers Paul Read
7. Piers Paul Johnson
8. Titus Paul Johnson after long lunch with the Papal Nuncio
9. Sir Conrad Blackadder
10. Cristina Odon'tchaloveher?!?

©The Spectacularlyboring 1994.



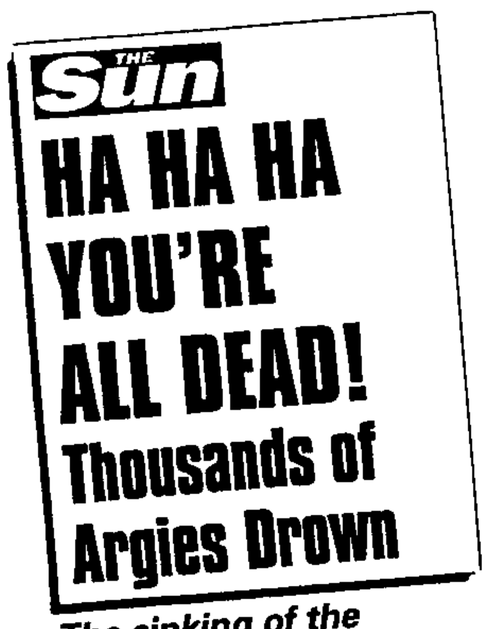
A GENIUS BOWS OUT

Fleet Street Legend Moves On

THE WORLD will never be the same again. The greatest newspaper editor of modern times, Kevin McFilth, last night "put the Sun to bed" for the last time.

There was scarcely a dry eye in the country as politicians and newspapermen queued to pay tribute to the man who was widely agreed to have been the true voice of modern Britain.

Here are some of the legendary front pages through which Kevin McFilth shaped the consciousness of the nation.



The sinking of the Belgrano, 1982

Outspoken Comment on immigration issue, 1983

Scoop in 1985

Scoop in 1986

Election, 1987

Election, 1992

(That's enough Ed)

NEW MAJOR TRIUMPH

Britain sold to Germany

by Our Industrial Staff **B.M.W. Deedes and Vorsprung Dirk Bogarde**

A DELIGHTED prime minister yesterday announced to the Commons that Britain had been sold to Germany for £50 billion.

"This is great news for Britain," he told cheering Tory backbenchers. "It shows once again that Britain is now so successful that other countries cannot wait to take it over."

Deutsch Landrover Uber Alles

As the Labour Party registered their protest by saying nothing, Mr Major accused them of "living in the past".

"In the modern international world," he told Mr. Smith, "countries no longer own themselves. They are part of huge multi-national conglomerates, such as Germany."

Mr Major, reading from notes, reminded the House that there had been a previous take-over bid from the Germans in 1940, under their then-managing director Herr Hitler.

"Unfortunately," he went on, "it was rejected by Mr Churchill. But now circumstances have changed and I expect the House to give a warm welcome to our new masters."

Watch This British Aerospace

Under the terms of the deal, Britain will receive £50 billion, sufficient to pay off the whole of this year's borrowing requirement.

A delighted Mr Kenneth Clarke explained: "It's good for exports too. From now on we shall be able to label all goods manufactured here 'Made in Germany'. They will sell like hot cakes, or rather German cars."

Herr Kohl is 91.

That New Radio One Playlist

1. **Help!** The Birtles
2. **Grandad, Grandad, You're Fired** The Choir of St Forgan's Primary School
3. **The Boys Are Back In Charge** Not Very Thin Lizzie
4. **Audience (I Can't Get No)** The Rolling News
5. **Deeply Dip In The Ratings** Right Said Freud
6. **All Steve Wright Now** Free T-Shirt
7. **Yakkety Yak (Don't Play Records)** Elton John Birt
8. **Message To Explain in a Bottle** The Thought Police
9. **D'Ye Ken John Peel With His Show So Dull?** Traditional
10. **You Ain't Heard Nuthin' Interesting** Bannisterman Turnoff Switchover

© Radio One Listener

"What a coincidence! I design high-rise blocks of flats, too!"

The Secret Diary of John Major aged 47¾

Monday

I'm afraid it was not a very good start to the week. All the papers had a picture of me with my head in my hands looking very miserable, as if something might be wrong with the country. In fact I was not miserable at all. I was just feeling rather tired and depressed. But then everything changed. The door burst open and in came Mr Meyer, who has taken over from Sir Gus O'Donnell. Jumping onto my desk (and knocking over all my biros incidentally) he pointed at the pictures and shouted: "That's the last time those bastards will be able to try anything like that. From now on it's no more Mr Nice Guy. We're going to kick some ass."

"Oh yes," I replied. "That is exactly what I was going to say, as soon as I heard you say it. I'm going to show them all who is the boss around here. What do I do first?" Mr Meyer then pulled out a list of people I had to be very rude to. He called it "The Getting Tough List".

1. Mr Smith.
2. Sir George Gardiner (memo: I must find out who he is).
3. The press.
4. The media.
5. The left.
6. The right.
7. Everyone else.

I cannot wait to begin and, to show Mr Meyer I meant business, I threw away all the biros that didn't work properly, especially the one saying "Portillo For PM" which he have me for Christmas as a joke.

Tuesday

Mr Lamont has attacked me for being "weak and useless". At first I had no idea what to do. But Mr Meyer suggested that I should add his name to the list. That will show him. Mr Lamont, who is even more my ex-friend than ever, even suggested that he should be the prime minister instead of me. I told this to my wife Norman, saying "How could he possibly be prime minister? He is utterly hopeless." "In that case," she said, "he sounds admirably qualified." Then she told me to be quiet because she wanted to watch the end of a new soap opera called Middlemarch.

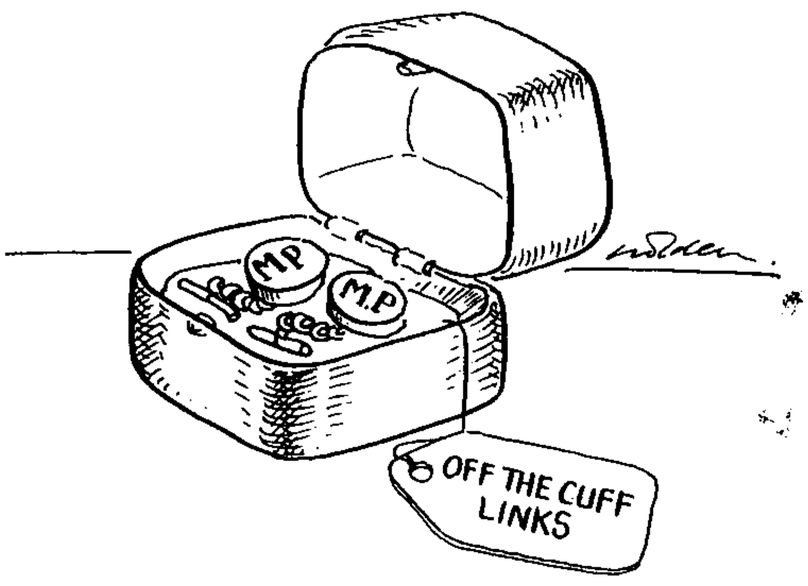
Wednesday

Today I found out who Sir George Gardiner is. He is the chairman of the 1992 Committee, which is not to be confused with the 1922 Committee. Not that I would confuse them, because I know the difference. One is 70 years older than the other, as you can tell by the dates! I was meant to have a meeting with Sir George today at 5.30, so that he could tell me that I should resign. But before he could sit down, Mr Meyer came bounding in the door and said: "The Prime Minister is very busy and hasn't got time to talk to right-wing loonies like you." Mr Gardiner then looked a bit puzzled and went out saying that he would come back at a more convenient time. Mr Meyer immediately began calling up lots of journalists and told them (off the record) that I had got "really bloody tough with that bastard Gardiner".

Thursday

The papers have got something right about me at last. They all had the same headline "Major Gets Tough With Tory Right", and described how I had kicked Mr Gardiner out of my office after only two minutes.

In the afternoon I decided to get tough with Mr Smith. He asked me in the House of Commons why I had let the Germans buy up Rover Cars. I jumped to my feet and replied: "Your question shows that you don't know anything about the free market. That is why we paid British Aerospace a huge sum to buy Rover in the first place." Everyone on the Labour side laughed at this brilliant reply. But I had not finished with Mr Smith. I am merciless these days! "I see that you have obviously prepared all your questions in advance," I told him, reading out what Sir Robin Butler had prepared for me to say. Mr Smith looked so shocked that he had to sit down.



Friday

Today it is Mr Clinton's turn to feel the lash of my toughness. Although he knew perfectly well that it would considerably annoy me, he allowed Gerry Adams to go to America and be on all the television programmes saying that he wanted peace and that I was against it. Mr Hurd was also in America at the same time, but he wasn't allowed to go on any programmes; so no one knew that I am actually for peace. Which I am. Very much so. As Mr Adams well knows because I told him, during the talks that we didn't have last year. But once again Mr Meyer has come to the rescue, showing how wise I was to appoint him as my new press secretary, when Mr Hurd told me to. This morning there were huge headlines in all the papers saying "Major Blasts Clinton", "Major Lashes Adams", "Anglo-US Rift Worst Since Boston Tea Party". Who says I am not achieving anything? Although I am afraid Mr Hurd was quite upset when he got back from America and saw how tough I was getting. "You should try it too, Douglas," I said. "Perhaps you could start by pulling the troops out of Bosnia. That would show everyone that we mean business."

Saturday

Mr Clinton does not seem to be getting my toughness message. He has let into America yet another undesirable self-publicist — i.e. the woman I never mention (Mrs Thatcher). How dare she go on television and say I am doing nothing about Bosnia. That is my job. And let there be no doubt about it in her mind.

Sunday

I am in no small measure surprised to see that I have given an interview to the Sunday Times. Apparently I have told the whole Conservative Party to stop saying I am useless behind my back. And they have got the message. Because today a man from the 1922 Committee came up to me and said "You're useless" to my face.

Monday

It says in the papers that Mr Smith is suddenly very popular. Yet he is not tough at all. Oh no. Perhaps I am being too tough. I suggested this to Mr Meyer, who told me to shut up, mind my own business and leave these things to people who knew what they were doing. I agreed entirely.

Lives of the Saints

No. 94. St Gerry the Peacemaker

IRELAND has been called the land of saints ever since the days of St Patrick. But few have been as saintly as the bearded holy man known to millions of American television interviewers simply as "Gerry". For many years he lived an obscure life of poverty, chastity and terrorism in the Falls Road, doing bad works among the poor. Then, in the Year of Our Lord 1994, St Gerry made his famous voyage across the Atlantic to America. Travelling in a frail jumbo jet, he landed in New York, where he was greeted by the natives with scenes of wild joy and mind-boggling stupidity. He immediately began to preach to the converted and was hailed on all sides as "the Man of Peace". "Let he who is without Sinn Fein," he proclaimed, "cast the first stone at a British soldier." There then followed many miracles. St Gerald appeared simultaneously to millions all over the city. And even in England they could still hear his words, spoken it seemed by a disembodied voice. But the greatest miracle St Gerald performed was to persuade the American people that he was a reincarnation of the Blessed Nelson Mandela. And they all fell down and worshipped him.

© The Sinn Fein Book of Saints.

NEXT WEEK: How St Semtex Turned Buildings Into Rubble.

MR JOHN MAJOR An Apology from Mr Norman Lamont

When I told a reporter from the *Times* newspaper that Mr Major was "weak", "useless", "totally incompetent" and "quite unfit to organise a piss-up in a brewery", I may have given the impression that the prime minister was in some way unsuitable to run the country.

I now realise that he is. Vote for me.

An Aplogy For The Above Apology

When I told this bird that Major was a total wimp, I had no idea that she was listening. Frankly, at the time my mind was on the question of what she was doing afterwards *(shurely 'the question of whether the pound should be allowed to shadow the Deutschmark in 1989'? P. Stothard).*

© Dullard and Wapshott, Commissioners of Articles.

What the Americans saw

VOICE: Hey — It's The Eddie Crewcut Show! And here's your host — Eddie Crewcut...

(Storm of applause. Shot of man with crewcut at desk)

EDDIE CREWCUT *(for it is he):* Hi, I'm Eddie Crewcut! *(Renewed hysterical applause)* And my guests tonight are Sally Sackpacker, star of the hit TV show *It's Sally*, Ronnie the Talking Raccoon; a 28-stone lady from Hicksville, Illinois, who ate her own weight in jelly; and first, all the way across the sea from Auld Oirland, Mr. Gerry Adams! Let's give a big all-American welcome to a real live hero from the land of the leprechaun.

(Band plays "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" as bespectacled bearded man comes onto the set).

CREWCUT: Hi, Gerry, great to have you here. Now Gerry, you're trying to bring peace to Ireland, is that right?

ADAMS: Yes it is.

CREWCUT: So there you are folks. Let's have a big round of applause for peace!

(More hysterical clapping, accompanied by waving of shamrocks and banging of Noraid collection tins. Crewcut consults research notes to find he has asked his only question)

ADAMS: We won't talk to the British until they agree to renounce violence.

CREWCUT: Can't argue with that! So another big hand for the broth of a boy, whose only desire is to see his people set free. And now, stay with us Gerry, we want you to meet a fabulous lady, who has eaten more jelly than anyone on earth.

(Enter vast woman who sits on remaining bits of sofa and describes her jelly eating exploits. Commercial break)

That Lamont-Times Lunch Menu in full

Soupe du Jour-naliste
or
Carp à la Premier

— ⁂ —

Old Beef with Hackette Potatoes
and
Black-Eyed M. Peas

— ⁂ —

Not-in-Cabinet Pudding
or
Black Wednesday Gateau with Whiplash Cream

— ⁂ —

Hard Cheese

— ⁂ —

Sour Grapes

— ⁂ —

Wines

(courtesy Thresher's of Praed Street, prop. J. Onanuga)

Chateau N.M. Rothschild 1994 pounds a day

— ⁂ —

Je Ne Regrette Riesling, Bundesbank-Kabinett

— ⁂ —

Finest Sack

— ⁂ —

VAT 17.5 Whisky

From the immortal pen of SYLVIE KRIN, author of Born to be Queen *and* Heir of Sorrows, *comes...*

THE LAST FAREWELL

THE STORY SO FAR: Charles has decided to end his long-standing relationship with Lady Ludmilla Parker-Knoll.

Now read on...

CHARLES skilfully manoeuvred his powerful Taylforth Turbo through the narrow lanes of Wiltshire, the cold clear February sky mirroring his present state of mind. The gaunt trees lifted their branches heavenwards in supplication for the hoped-for spring and Charles was clear what he had to do to bring about his own spring after the long dark winter of discontent. On the Blaujobb car radio Classic FM was playing a plaintive serenade which Mr Henry O'Kelly announced was Mazurka's Chopin. "And now brought to you by Izzard Insurance another hit from the library of the world's most beautiful melodies: it's the first movement of Handel's Water Music by Beethoven."

Charles felt his spirits lift as the exquisite strains of a Mozart Piano Concerto filled the car. He rehearsed again the words that he had prepared to say. "Now look Ludmilla, old girl. You see I'm going to be the King and that means I've got to be head of the church thingie and so you and I can't really carry on, you know, like we have done. I know Archie's been awfully good, but in the end it's got to be er er..."

He stumbled over the word "goodbye", a small lump forming in his regal throat, but he shook himself and swallowed hard, thinking of his duty.

What was it his old friend and mentor Sir Laurens Van der Post had said to him as they had strolled in the shade of Pam Ayres Rock in the Australian outback? "Whenever I feel afraid I whistle a happy tune." How very true that was, though not entirely relevant at this particular juncture.

Still, he whistled along with the radio for a few bars but the music came to an abrupt end.

"That was Mozart's Madison Avenue Concerto played by Elvira Presley Baxendale on a real grand piano provided by the Newman and Baddiel Building Society. And now today's racing tips. Ha ha..."

A PAIR of long-eared Dimbleby Spaniels came racing to the car door, their tails wagging in delighted recognition of their Royal guest as Charles clambered out of the driving seat. He reached back into the car and took out the bouquet of blue Peter Lilleys that he had picked up at the service station on the motorway. The price had been what he could only describe as appalling. £7.99 for only six flowers! No wonder the country was in such a mess. Something would have to be done as his great uncle had said just before he abdicated.

"Down, Jonathan! Down, David!"

Ludmilla was standing waiting for him at the entrance to Knoll Hall wearing her familiar waxed Lyn Barber jacket. The highlights in her hair glinted in the pale sunlight and a gentle smile played about her lips. What an extraordinarily beautiful sort of thingie she was, Charles thought, and what a damned lucky chap Archie had been to have caught her.

"Archie sends his regards by the way," she said with a knowing look. "It's his Lord Lieutenant's Day and he's opening a new day centre for battered husbands in Holden St. Anthony."

This ritual completed the couple walked awkwardly into the drawing room, where a blazing log fire greeted them.

"I er..." They both began talking at the same time, then stopped and laughed nervously. "No you begin..." They stopped again and their eyes met. There was something in the air and they both knew it. Even the dogs sensed it and slunk behind the studded leather embonpoint and began to whine piteously.

"I've been thinking about us," Ludmilla finally began, her voice strangely distant. "Look Charles, old boy, you see, you're going to be the King and that means Head of the Church so you and I can't really carry on like we have done. I know Archie's been an absolute brick, but in the end it's got to be goodbye."

Somehow this wasn't going quite as Charles had expected. He struggled for words.

"No, *I* was going to, er..."

He looked at her and thought again how ravishing she was. A tide of passion coursed through his royal veins. He put out his hand. "Darling. This will have to be the last time."

Ludmilla stepped back. She was only a foot away from him but she might as well have been a million miles.

"No, Charles. I'm expecting the vet to look at Jonathan's teeth. I think he's got an abscess."

"Is that it, then?" he stammered, "I mean couldn't we just sort of say goodbye properly upstairs as it were..."

The door burst open.

"Not interrupting, am I?" asked a red-faced man in tweeds carrying a black case. "I got held up at the farm over at Scruton Roger. The parrot had twins. Never seen it before."

"Come in Dr Hardy. My guest is just leaving..."

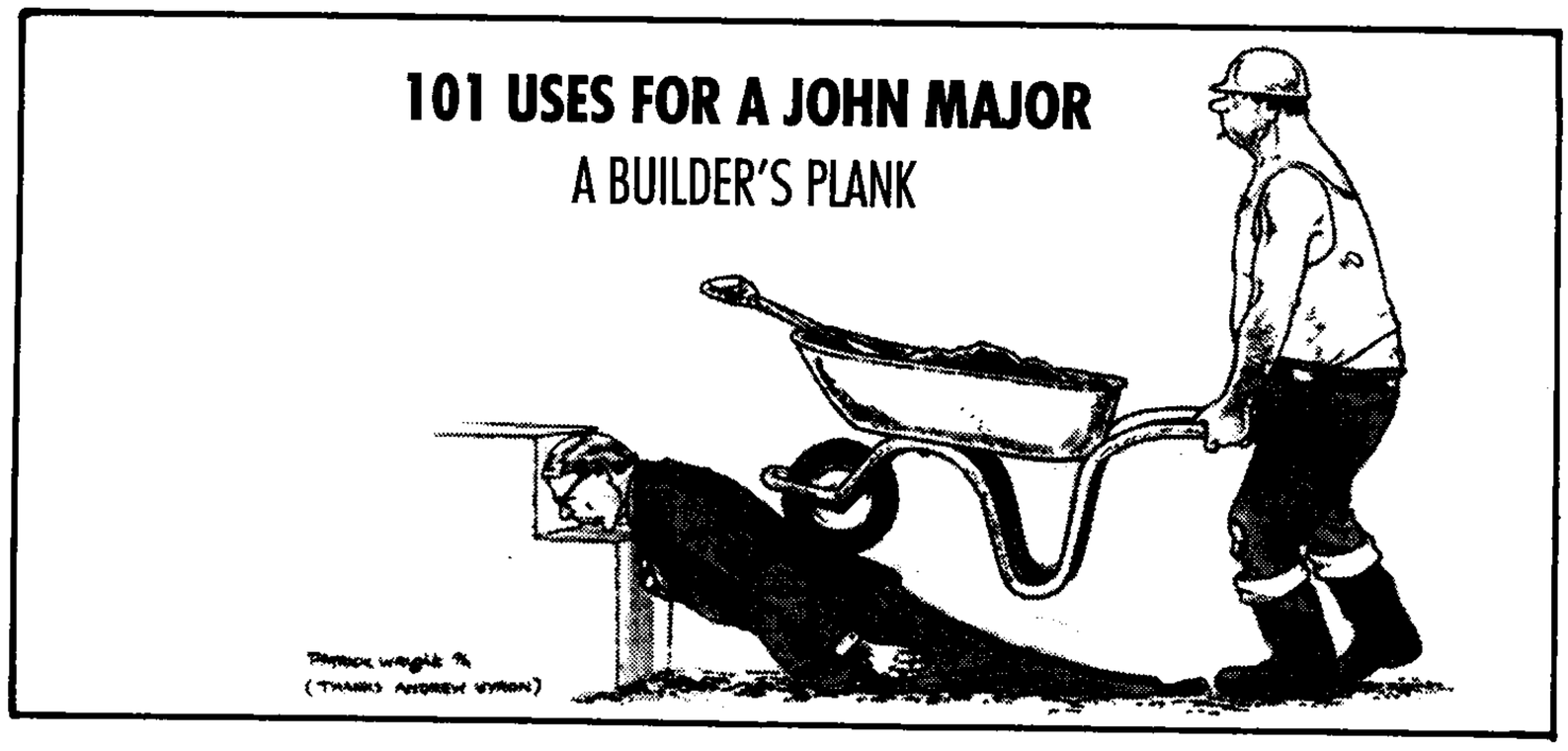
CHARLES put his foot down and sped down the motorway back towards London. It had not gone as he would have wished, but then, he thought ruefully, life rarely did. But he had done his duty, painful though it was, and surely at last the press would acknowledge that he had done the right thing for once and acted in a manner worthy of a future monarch.

It began to grow dark and Charles noted the fuel light flashing on the dashboard. He pulled up at the Fenby Happy Break services, where he knew they sold special Benzine-free organic petrol. As he proffered his Access card to a smiling attendant, his eye caught the front page of the Evening Standard.

"Royal Exclusive. Now Chazza Dumps Ludmilla! What a Bastard!"

"Do you want your tokens, sir?" a voice asked. Charles turned away. Had he lost everything? Was he to be consoled with tokens?

(To be continued)



HUGE ROW OVER NEW BISHOP

by Our C of E Staff
Ordinand Mount

The Church of England was rocked to its foundations yesterday by the revelation that the new Bishop of Durham believes in God. *(Contd Psalm 94)*

Alan Cargs

THE local peasantry of Cricklewood, of which stout yeomen I am proud to count myself among the stoutest, have a saying amongst themselves as they lower a jar or twain down at the Ferret & Quantity Surveyor, to which noble axiom I shall shortly return, for there are first weightier matters to be settled — to wit, the Strange Affair of the Garden Shed, the Dead Wasp and the Chinese Takeaway — three seemingly unrelated and yet *(contd for 2,000 words before collecting cheque).*

TOMORROW: The same.

FOREIGN MAN, 33/189/74, speak english, educated economist/ hotel manager, good cock, wishes to meet danish girl/woman, 30-40 years, for friendship.

Politiken (Denmark)

Great Bores Of Today.

"... I was all for it opera is so elitist it was only a handful of people who could afford to go down to Sussex and now they've opened it up so that it's much more accessible which is admirable obviously I agree with Emma on that but I have to say Mummy has got a point that when you look at it the auditorium is hideous it's absolutely horrible and the place will be a nightmare Charlotte reckons our picnic spot will be overrun with people eating hamburgers Robin says the intimacy will have gone completely you know the rapport between audience and performer was unique and the setting is beautiful those lawns are fabulous but now there'll be coach tours and people who don't know how to dress Daddy reckons it won't be long till there's a McDonalds you're right everyone should have the right to go to opera but I don't see why they have to ruin it you know for people who can really appreciate it Steven Berkoff's awfully good isn't he...?"

PIXIE FROU FROU HAS GONE BLOOMIN' HORSE MAD SINCE I BOUGHT HER THAT PONY.
YEAH?
SHE'S DOWN IN THE VILLAGE ARRANGING TO JOIN THE LOCAL PONY CLUB AS WE SPEAK, MATE.
REALLY?
YEAH. I THINK IT'S DELIGHTFUL, THE IDEA OF HER HAVING FUN WITH ALL THOSE SWEET LITTLE RIDERS
AH...
RIGHT I WANT MY OWN PRIVATE DRESSING ROOM, FREE MARS BARS AFTER EVERY GYMKHANA, IMPORTED TUSCAN HAY FOR MY PONY...
MEMBERSHIP ISN'T NEGOTIABLE YOU KNOW...

KNACKER IN SHOCK ARREST

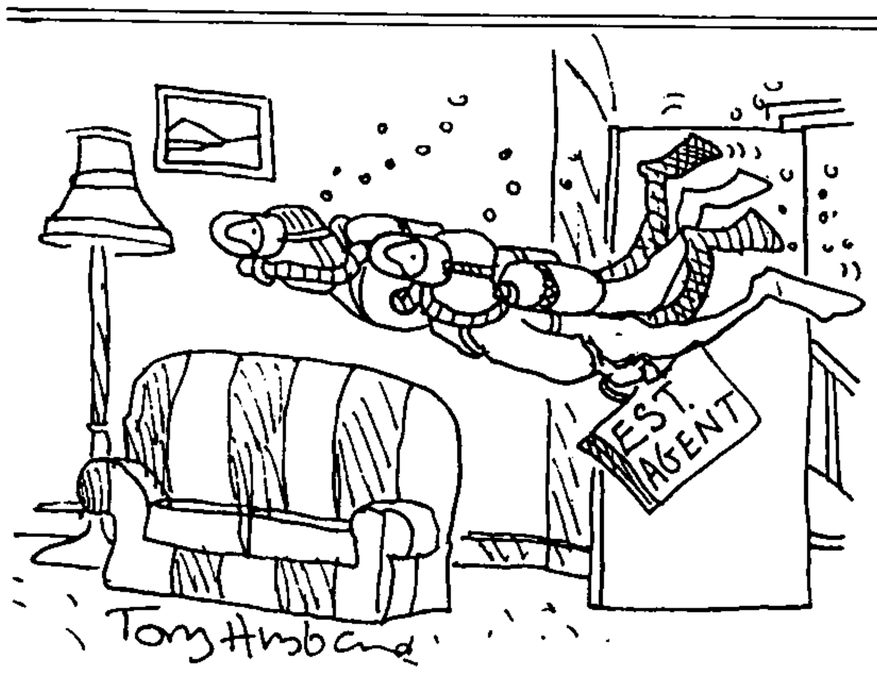
by Our Crimewatch Staff **Nick Rozzers**

INSPECTOR "Knacker of the Yard" Knacker announced a breakthrough in crime prevention last night when he arrested himself in connection with the Stoke Newington corruption case.

"I'm very confident that this time I have got the right man," he said. "This success in Operation Own-Goal proves that the police are tackling crime efficiently. Police officers such as myself have a high clear-up rate in solving the increase in crime which we have committed."

A police spokesman said that Knacker would be bringing charges against himself — namely, £2,000 to let himself off with a warning.

Inspector Knacker is PC49.



"To be honest, the damp's worse than I expected"

My Week

by Sir Perishing Worthless

LAST week I found myself seated at a luncheon party next to Mr Abraham Wargs, who told me that his recently published memoirs *How Much Am I Getting?* had sold 400 million copies in hardback.

As soon as luncheon was over, I put through a call to my publishers to enquire how many copies they had sold of my own superb autobiography, *The Sunday Telegraph — The Fateful Years*.

The young woman on the switchboard seemed not even to know who I was. When I demanded to speak to the publisher, I was rudely told that he was in a meeting.

I told the illiterate harpy that this was an incredible discourtesy to a very distinguished author. "Tradesmen," I told her, "have no right to be in meetings. They should be out telling the world about my wonderful book."

Eventually a person in the sales department informed me in a Cockney voice that my book had sold only two copies since publication and that the rest of the copies had been "pulped".

I was so angry that I immediately wrote to the publisher, informing him that I would never write another book for him ever again. Things have certainly come to a sorry pass when publishers are so incompetent that they cannot sell books by someone as good as me.

MY WIFE Lucy has bought me a pair of new underpants. They carry a strange drawing of what appears to be a mouse, with large ears, and the legend "Come to Euro Disney".

Things have come to a pretty pass when I am allowed to write this sort of drivel in a once-reputable Sunday newspaper *(contd p. 94)*

World of Soccer

YES — IT'S OFFICIAL! DALEY FOR ENGLAND JOB

by **E.I. Erewego**, Our Man In The All-Seater Stadium With The Fantasy Football Video And The Packet Of Mini Dimes.

THE WORLD of soccer finally breathed a sigh of relief yesterday when football's most prestigious job was given to Arthur Daley, the controversial South London businessman.

The appointment came after weeks of speculation during which questions were raised about Mr Daley's former business dealings.

There was some concern at the Football Association over the following allegations:

■ **That Mr Daley had sold a Greek restaurateur a number of unbreakable plates, claiming that the said plates would be suitable for a traditional Greek bazouki evening.**

■ **That he had, moreover, asked two labourers to fill a lorry full of manure and then had refused to pay them.**

DALEY TEL

Sir Bert Microchip, the 200-year-old chairman of the FA, said that his committee had examined Mr Daley's commercial exploits as recorded by the *Financial Times* under the heading "How does he get away with it" and had concluded that these factors had no bearing on his ability to manage a losing football side.

Speaking from his temporary office in the Peckham branch of Ladbroke's, Mr Daley said:

"This is a real challenge. I've never managed an international side before, but I expect it is no different from any other area of commercial entrepreneurship. By the way, do you want to borrow a greyhound? He's only got three legs, but he's a great little runner."

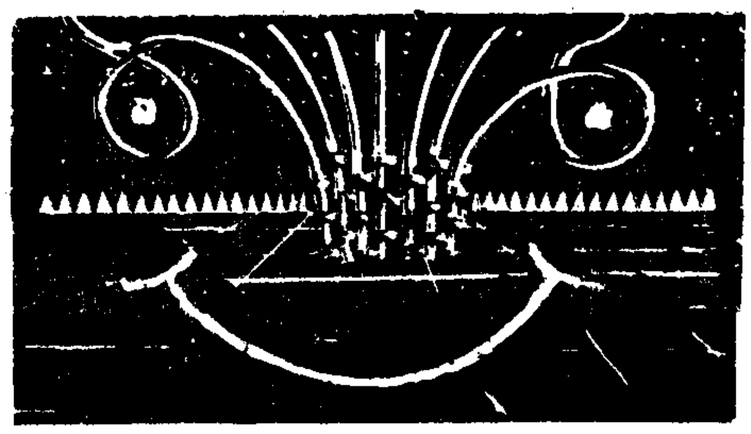
LATE SCORE

Friendly

England	0
Gaza Strip (Arafat 23, Hamas 1)	24

SUPERMODELS Neil Kerber

DIARY



THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE

Andrew Devonshire: February is the month I devote to re-arranging the cushions on the sofa in my dressing room, and I do so without any help whatsoever from our staff. As you might imagine, it is quite a job, there being no less than four cushions, each of a different colour. Thus one might choose to arrange the navy blue on one side, the pink on the other, with pale yellow and lincoln green somewhere in the middle, only to find that, on second thoughts, it actually looks better to have the pink somewhere in the middle, with the pale yellow to the left, the navy blue to the right, leaving room for the lincoln green to remain in the middle, only this time next to the pink and not to the pale yellow, unless of course it is between the pink and the pale yellow. Whenever I have met them, I have found that the British public are extraordinarily ignorant of the demands and pressures with which we in the so-called "upper classes" are confronted day by day. I sometimes think that the "ordinary" people, for all their immense pluck, fail to appreciate the many onerous tasks that befall the Stately Home owner, and I welcome this opportunity to "put them in the picture". Re-arranging the cushions on the sofa in my dressing-room is one such task, and the time and planning involved are not to be underestimated. First, I have one of our staff nip out to the local shops to buy me a range of excellent new French devices known as "crayons", which are what we used to know as pencils, but with brightly coloured leads. I then spend a week or so measuring out on a piece of paper and colouring in four squares — pink, pale yellow, lincoln green and navy blue — and a further week cutting them out. This leaves me just a fortnight to juggle these four coloured squares around this way and that, until I am perfectly satisfied that I have "come up" with the best new arrangement. It all makes for a highly enjoyable topic of dinner conversation too, and, come February, our guests delight in spending an hour and a half or so over the soup arguing the pros-and-cons of, say, having the pink on the left or the pale yellow on the right, and thoroughly productive it is too.

Deborah Devonshire: The second week of February is now virtually over, and I still haven't found time to assist poor Andrew with the uphill struggle he is having with the rearrangement of his cushions, so utterly hectic has my own life been, what with the frightful bother of trying to impose some semblance of order on my scarf drawer. "Scarf" — that's an interesting word, and of course "cushion" is another, and we discussed how interesting they were over dinner the night before last. Norman St John of Fawnsley pointed out that there is no other word in the English language spelt c-u-s-h-i-o-n, in that order, and when I pointed out that it is also the only word in English spelt exactly in that way meaning something you can sit on, darling Roy Strong got tremendously over-excited, clapping his hands together, and was kind enough to tell me how clever I was!! The two of them were such utter poppets that after they had finished their main courses I told them they could get off their knees for pudding and sit with us around the grown-ups table. (Memo to self: "table" — now that's an interesting word, and worthy of fuller discussion among my houseguests over the course of March.)

Andrew Devonshire: Has anyone solved the problem of what to do when you reach the end of the right-hand page when reading a book? It really is an awful chore to attempt to what I believe is now known as "turn the page over". Often the pages turn two, or even three, at a time, so that one loses one's place and misses some major event that may or may not have happened in those two or three pages, and, even if one does manage to turn just the one page, one still encounters the problem of having to re-organise one's fingers and hands so as to incorporate the freshly-turned page. Of course, during the daytime, one can call for a highly-skilled member of one's staff to perform the necessary feat — and they do so with great dexterity, I might add — but while reading in bed at night, for instance, it really is too tiresome to have to ring one's bell so that some poor fellow has to come running in his nightshirt. One solution, of course, if the book consists of 200-odd pages, is to buy 200-odd copies of the book, and to ask the bookseller politely if he will pre-open each book to a fresh page, but I imagine this solution may present some storage disadvantages for those living in the more modest stately homes, "bungalows", and so forth. Incidentally, I am at present reading, and greatly enjoying, a book called "Rearranging Your Upstairs Cushions", available through the National Trust, as I may or may not have told you that February is the month I devote to re-arranging the cushions on the sofa in my dressing room — quite a chore as it turns out!!

Deborah Devonshire: I was intrigued to learn recently that there is now a product on the market which can turn bread into "toast", without any need for all the palaver of toasting fork, fire, butler and so forth. This splendidly ingenious contraption is called a "toaster", comes in a variety of colours and can be obtained from many leading shops. What on earth will they think of next? Andrew and I now spend many a happy hour making toast, by simply placing a slice of bread (which now comes "ready-sliced", if you can believe it!) into the slot in the "toaster", pressing the button down, and waiting a minute or two before it "pops up". If one wants a second slice, one simply buys another toaster and repeats exactly the same moves again. Buttering the toast is another matter, which we feel safest leaving to our excellent cook. Isn't it about time someone invented a contraption so that buttering, too, became the proverbial "piece of cake"? How well I remember in the old days my sisters Dipso and Bimbo and Commie and Loopi and I all having an absolute whale of a time attempting to butter a piece of bread by holding the bread in our hands and passing it roughly over the wodge of butter, but we met with little success, so — with typically delightful aristocratic eccentricity! — we simply threw the butter out of an upstairs window for all the simply marvellous little servants to enjoy! I wonder what happened to that concept of fun, or is it now considered "old-fashioned" or — worse! — "square"?

Andrew Devonshire: The month of March — one of my favourites — is just round the corner, and another chore looms, for March is always the month I devote to plumping up the cushions I will have just re-arranged on the sofa in my dressing room. But which should I plump up first — the pink or the pale yellow or the lincoln green or the navy blue? At the beginning of the month, we will be throwing a Ball for some of our greatest friends in order to discuss the matter. Desperately hard work, yes, exhausting, yes, but such are the obligations and duties that come with the ownership of one of our great historic houses.

Literary Review

Tissue paper tiger

The Fermata
Nicholson Baker
(Chatto, £14.99)

STILL in his thirties, Nicholson Baker is the great white hope among American writers. Ask any bright young reviewer who's new and worth reading, Baker's is one of the names that is sure to be produced. Or maybe the only one.

Previously published here by Granta, Baker has now switched to Chatto and gone for the big push. Everything possible is being done to make *The Fermata* a success: 480 numbered proof copies — an edition as big as some novelists receive for the finished product — have been sent out to the hacks and reps.

The jacket promises sales-aids galore: "Tear-strip banner posters. Limited edition *Fermata* mobile. Special 12-copy dumpbin with three dimensional header. Nationwide adshel and billboard campaign. Extensive author pr including major television profile."

So it's a shame, with all these come-ons, that the book's such an extraordinary turn-off. It's not that it's dull or badly written or unoriginal. Nor even that it's the most pornographic book any equivalently talented writer has ever published. It's that this is a dirty book in the sense that it actually leaves one feeling soiled for having read it, as if you have been used for somebody else's perverted pleasure.

Nicholson Baker's trick has always been to get in closer than anybody else. He likes to linger longer over minutiae than anybody else had thought of doing. In *The Mezzanine*, he spent an entire book describing an office-worker's routine lunch-hour, showing that if you look microscopically enough, the most ordinary things can become interesting. The same gambit worked less well when duplicated in his next book, *Room Temperature*, about 20 minutes of baby-minding.

U And I was a different kind of close-up. Baker divulged outrageously intimate and embarrassing feelings about the author he has most emulated, John Updike. For example: "I myself have never successfully masturbated to Updike's writing, though I have to certain scenes in Iris Murdoch."

Vox, Baker's novel about telephone sex, set the alarm bells ringing. Stretching time ingeniously again, it consisted entirely of an imaginary four-hour phone-call between a man and a woman who incite each other to masturbate by telling each other their sexual fantasies in lurid detail.

Baker's style depends upon the

things he describes seeming normal enough, merely never previously revealed. Unhappily, it has become increasingly apparent that Nicholson Baker is a far from normal man. Actually, he's a complete wanker.

In a *Vanity Fair* interview a couple of years ago he admitted masturbating while he writes. "I don't think that you could do a mathematical study of the prose rhythms and find out exactly where I jerked off and didn't. But the writing probably does change..." he boasted. And he's getting more and more compulsive.

In *Vox* he had contrived a neat premise for all the sex being in words, not deeds. The basic plot device of *The Fermata* is artful enough too. The hero, Arno Strine, a temp typist as Baker himself was before his success, has discovered a magic way of making time stand still for everybody except himself ("fermata" is a musical term for a pause).

There used to be an Australian children's TV series in which the same thing happened whenever a magic boomerang was thrown. While time was frozen, the kids rushed around, foiling bankrobbers, cheeking teachers, rescuing koalas, etc. Arno, however, pulls off the knickers and bras of immobilised women and wanks away, coming on them for preference ("I let all of my burning bechamel jump out onto her tightly closed eyes", etc.) "All the world was a dirty magazine", Arno gloats. It's a voyeur's dream: it's Nicholson Baker's dream.

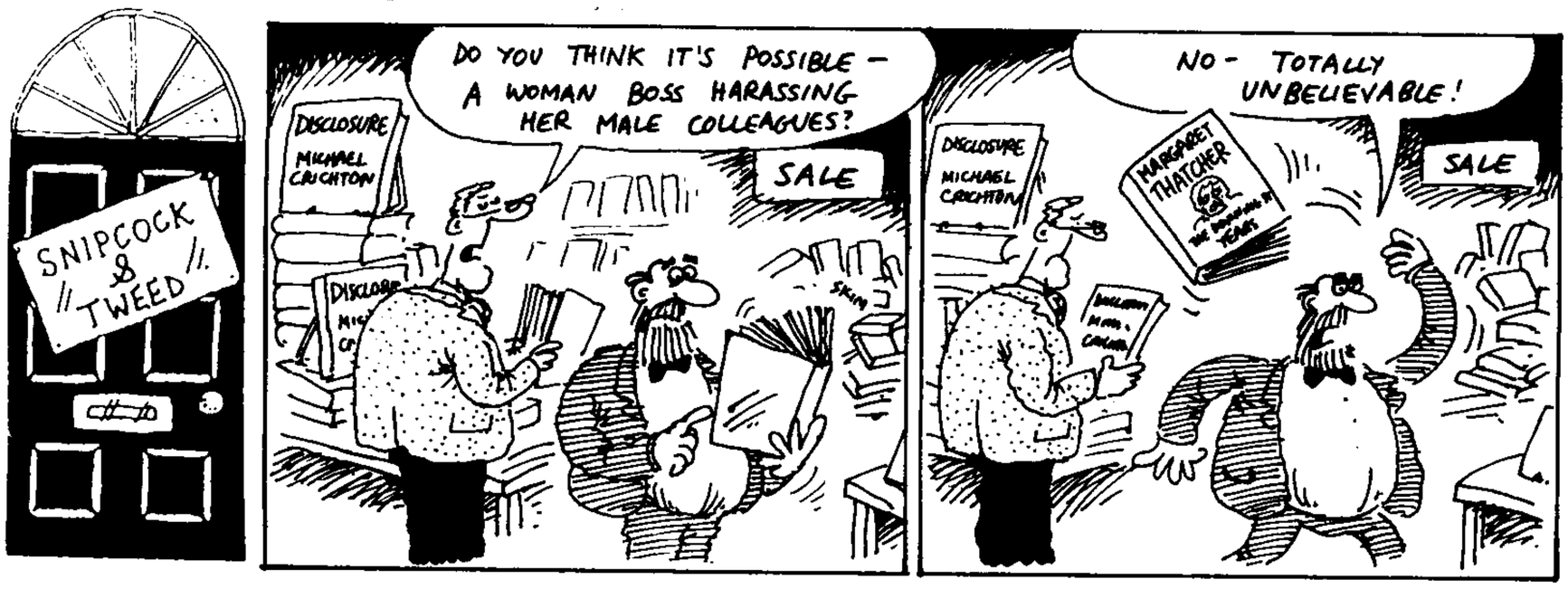
Baker certainly delights in pounding his vocabulary. Arno talks of "my gender-beam", "my bloated factotum", "my erect stain-stick", "my troika", "my truine crotch lump" from which he ejects "boiling scream-cream", "scumsquibs", "peckerpaste", "smut-schnapps", or "come tangents". Nicholson Baker is very pleased with himself and his huge vocabulary.

But that's not the limit of the obscenity. Arno's greatest delight is to write pornography himself within the novel — great extracts involving every possible act are included — and then watch women obligingly masturbate to it — while, using the magic trick, he secretly watches, masturbating himself. It's a reflection of a reflection. This, you realize with alarm, is meant to be you, reading Nicholson Baker. He gets his kicks imagining you reading his porn. He also wants you to sense him wanking (about you wanking about him wanking...)

Baker has obviously had one or two little qualms about this — as it might be, moments of sanity. Arno keeps insisting that he is no rapist or near-necrophile, molesting these unconscious women. At the end, to make Baker feel better, he even loses his magical powers and finds love with a real live woman.

But Baker's obsession with the rhythm of his prose, which goes to the rhythm of his right hand, is unmistakeable. At one point, Arno has been wanking so much while typing his porn that he gets RSI in his wrist ("a carpal tunnel problem", Baker specifies). This is great news because it gives him a chance to toss off in front of the woman doctor, to show exactly how he does it, switching between a finger and thumb grip and a fist grip, changing speeds.

Now, Nicholson Baker has never been able to invent a conventional novel. All his books are autobiographical. So when Chatto's "extensive author pr including major television profile" begins in a week or two, do take a close look at that great man's right hand. If you should meet him, for heaven's sake don't shake it.



"Look, he's reading a book at last"

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

☐ **ON THURSDAY 10 February at the British book awards dinner at the Park Lane Hilton, presided over by David Frost (following on from Melvyn Barg and Frank Delaney), the coveted "Nibbie" for author of the year will be presented to Roddy Doyle, whose *Paddy Clarke Ha, Ha, Ha* has easily outsold any previous Booker prize winner.**

■ LIFE HAS still not settled down at Hodder Headline's sumptuous new offices in Euston Road. Grim Steely-Hatchetman, newly returned from a hatcheting tour of Australia and New Zealand, was appalled to find calenders and pages from magazines and suchlike stuck up on the expensive new grey partition walls. Besides which, such decorative baubles could distract staff from work.

In a dawn raid, all posters, lists of telephone numbers and publication dates — anything attached with adhesive of an insidious kind, including blu-tac or drawing pins — was ripped down.

As to authors, the people wot right the bokes, Hatchetman is having difficulty keeping them loyal. Tom Keneally will shortly be in town for the premiere of Steven Spielberg's movie version of his Booker prizewinner, *Schindler's List* — might he bump into his old Hodder editor, Cornish Trewin, in St Martin's Lane where Ion now presides over Weidenfeld & Nicolson?

Stephen Gallagher, whose *Nightmare With Angel* was described by *The Indy* when published in 1993 as "the best European thriller published this year", has instructed his agent to arrange his next contract not with Hodder Headline but with HarperCollins, Simon & Schuster, Pan Macmillan or Random House.

Edwina Currie, the famous political novelist, has declared to the redundant Rev Cohen that she will follow him to the end of the earth. Unfortunately for her, the vicar's new job is unlikely to be as an editor: he is hotly tipped to take over the directorship of the Book Trust in glamorous Wandsworth.

All is not lost, however. Hodder Headline still has the patrician and touchy James Clavell. Maybe his erstwhile publisher, decent workaholic Eric Major Major, will have to be shunted back from religious books to keep the Shogun sweet.

'Bookworm'

In the City

BRITAIN'S most fortunate fraudster, Roger "The Dodger" Levitt, is wasting no time in claiming what is his, now that both the courts and bankruptcy are behind him.

Within weeks of his bankruptcy being automatically discharged, "The Dodger" has been pressing for information about the lucrative pension fund he set aside for himself prior to the collapse of his Roger Levitt Group.

It is estimated that Levitt could be entitled to £1 million or more as a result of premiums paid into various personal pension schemes by RLG. Six-figure premiums were paid in the months before the company crashed in December 1990.

To the anguish of his personal creditors, who are owed £67 million, it seems this pot of gold may prove to be out of reach, although this is as yet by no means certain — especially if it could be shown that Levitt knew the company was going down at the time the premiums were paid.

Still, "The Dodger" seems confident enough to be demanding a report on his ill-gotten pension gains. Last month he wrote to Brooks Braithwaite, the firm of insurance brokers charged with independently evaluating the Levitt pensions, demanding "a report register of my interest in the company pension schemes".

Emphasising that he is no longer bankrupt or at risk of a prison sentence — courtesy of Mr Justice (Lack of) Laws — Levitt, never a man lacking in *chutzpah*, goes on to demand "that my rights under the Financial Services Act be adhered to, namely that I wish to know the state and value of the pension funds in respect of those applicable to me". Levitt concludes imperiously: "I would like your report to be with me within five working days."

Creditors will be touched by Roger's detailed knowledge of the FSA given that it was for breaching the same act that he was "punished" with 180 hours' community service. The jury was told that Levitt was a salesman who knew nothing about regulatory matters! But that was then (when prison was involved). And this is now (when money is involved).

So far no report has been provided to the super-confident "Dodger", who is busy operating his vacuum cleaner business from offices in Mayfair. Meanwhile creditors continue the hunt for the missing millions it is suspected Roger may have secreted away, aided by close associates.

Levitt of course denies he has hidden any assets, but as a man described as "thoroughly and markedly dishonest" creditors would be forgiven if they did not totally believe him.

MORE information has emerged regarding the strange tale of the soon not to be *Independent* at all's intrepid "Tin Tin", Tim Kelsey, and the detectives from the Serious Farce Office whose birthdays were a matter of such abiding interest to those like "Tin Tin" who take the Nadir party line.

As reported in the last issue, a firm of private investigators had been seeking to establish, by way of pretext calls, the dates of birth of two Scotland Yard detectives involved in the SFO's Polly Peck prosecution. This followed approaches by Kelsey and others on his behalf to private investigators seeking help to obtain the same information. The dates are relevant to bolstering the ludicrous claims (accepted in part if not in whole by Kelsey) of self-confessed liar and convicted criminal Michael Francis that he was pressured into inventing a supposed plot to bribe the Nadir trial judge by a desperate SFO.

Those approached were effectively assured that "expense is no object" — an unusually profligate policy for the cash-strapped *Independent*, unless of course the newspaper was not going to pay?

Eventually a small firm called Euro-Tec was hired to do the job. Euro-Tec is typical of the small-time snoops used as sub-contractors by bigger rivals and others wanting a "cut out" to avoid being connected with dubious activities such as obtaining sensitive information which is not available legally or without risk of embarrassment. Euro-Tec, run by self-described journalist Gary Murray, operates from offices in Egham, Surrey.

Not long after Euro-Tec's crude attempts to obtain the information were "blown", a "Mr Saunders" contacted the *Eye* offering information about Tim Kelsey. He left a mobile telephone number which, alas, was never switched on. However, a telephone call to Euro-Tec asking for "Saunders" resulted in the call being referred to a Virginia Water telephone number answered by a "Mrs Morris", who denied any knowledge of a "Mr Saunders". It transpired that the number called was Murray's unlisted home number, as a second call established that he was not in.

Sadly it seems the not so *Independent* and/or "Tin Tin" may not have received value for money from playing detectives.

● It is entirely coincidental that the soon to be non-*Independent*, so active in its publication of pro-Nadir items, shares a link to that equally passionate advocate of Nadir's cause as a victim of injustice, Anthony Scrivener QC. A regular contributor to the *Independent*'s law reports is barrister Ying Hui Tan. A Ying Hui Tan is also better known as Mrs Scrivener. Shome relation, possibly?

MEANWHILE pressures on the fugitive former Polly Peck boss have been ratcheted up more than a little as a result of last month's devaluation of the Turkish lira.

The $4.2 million Asil Nadir obtained from the Northern Cyprus government's social insurance department's pension fund, via a one-year deposit with the Nadir-controlled Cyprus Industrial Bank (CIB), will now cost some 30 percent more to repay. The 12.8 percent interest, also payable in dollars, is equally more expensive in terms of the amount of lira required to purchase the necessary US currency.

Although Turkey only officially devalued its lira by 12 percent, the unofficial devaluation is nearer 30 percent for those wanting large amounts of dollars. Nadir is understood to have converted all the dollars into lira other than some $500,000 used to finance his threatened legal actions here and in Strasbourg's European Court of Human Rights.

The impact of the devaluation is that at current rates when the CIB comes to repay the deposit at the end of the year it will need to find another $1 million in capital plus a further $150,000 on the $500,000 interest bill. Exactly how the near insolvent bank could achieve repayment was less than clear even before the massive devaluation. Nadir was apparently gambling on the astronomic interest rates paid for lira deposits by Turkish banks to ensure repayment, but those calculations are out the window. But that of course assumes Nadir ever intended to repay!

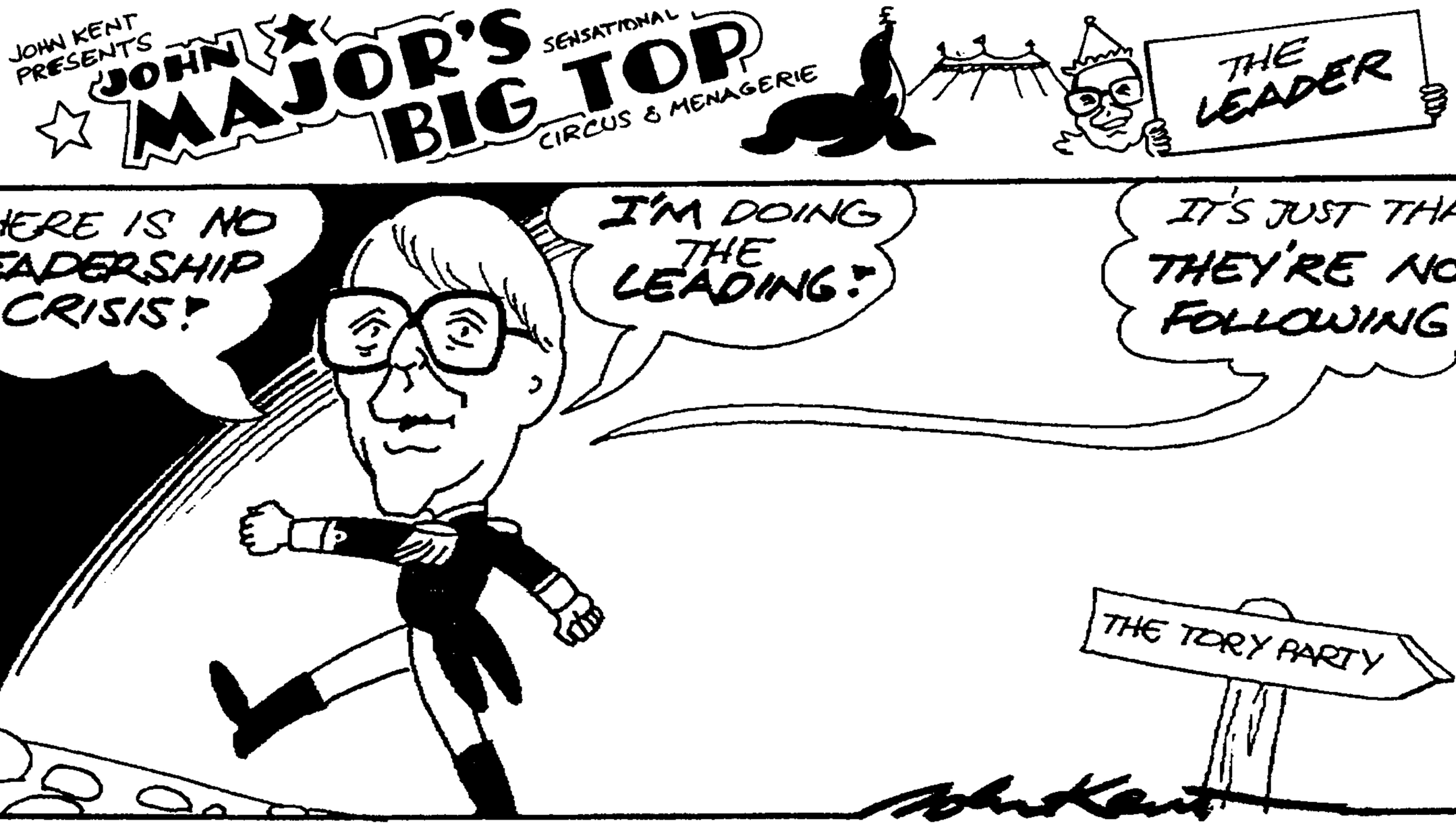
It is said that the left-wing partners in the new coalition government are already pressing for the money to be repaid. Nadir has met this by telling his former best friend, president Rauf Denktash, "can't pay, won't pay". All of which must be highly reassuring for the Turkish Cypriot pensioners.

THE attorney-general's absurd intervention to prevent the Maxwell musical on grounds of possible contempt of the criminal case against the brothers would be laughable if it were not indicative of the way in which the defence increasingly dictates in fraud cases.

Kevin Maxwell's esteemed lawyers, Peters & Peters, have been pressing for a virtual ban on any Maxwell related publicity, none of which can be exactly helpful, while cautioning the press against maligning their client's saintly father. They are clearly preparing for a Birmingham Six-style application that a fair trial is impossible, or a similar option on appeal.

It is not anticipated that the Maxwell trial will start before July and possibly not until September. The Maxwell musical was due to open later this month. It is good to know that Maxwell's lawyers and the attorney-general think it will be such a hit that it will still be running in six months' time — or will have so impressed those who see it as to make them think Cap'n Bob was a bad man. Perhaps the producers should offer to rename the show "The Dead Man Did It". Doubtless Kevin and Co would then have no objection.

'Slicker'



FOOTNOTES. . . see over

footnotes

THE BRIDGEWATER CASE

The Good Shepherd

TWO POWERFUL documents about the Carl Bridgewater murder case have landed on the desk of home secretary Michael Howard. Both undermine still further the base of the prosecution case in the 1979 trial — the confession of the Irish carpenter, the late Pat Molloy.

The first document is a long letter from one of the country's most respected forensic psychologists. Dr Eric Shepherd often works for police forces and prosecutions. When another secret police inquiry into the Bridgewater case was set up in 1991, the police officer in charge, Det Chief Supt Tom Baxter of Merseyside CID, turned to Dr Shepherd for an expert opinion.

Baxter submitted his report in the autumn of 1992. In January last year, Clarke announced that he would not reopen the case. Dr Shepherd, however, did not remain silent. Last summer he went on television to say the police account of Molloy's confession and the interviews which led up to it did not make sense.

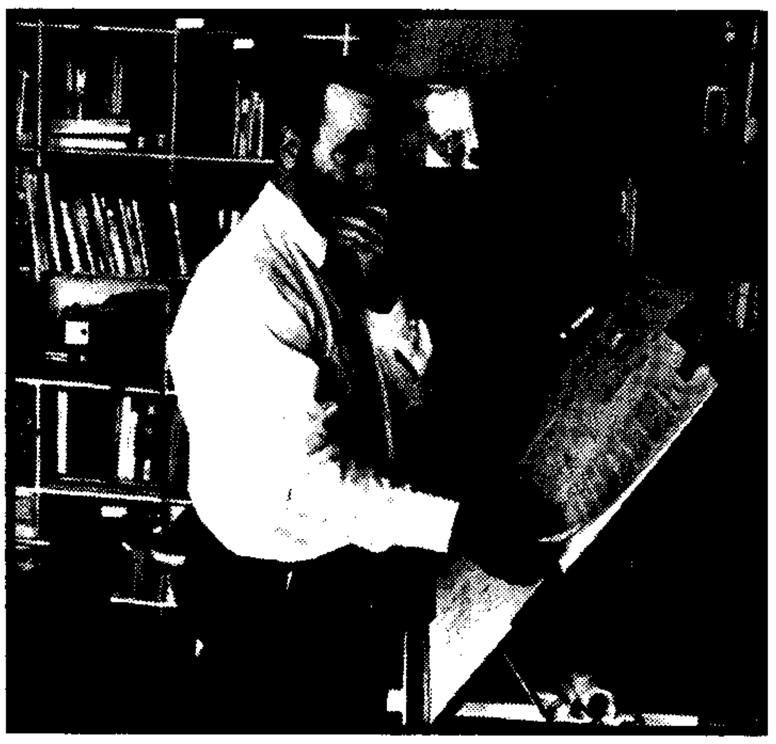
In December he travelled with a fellow forensic psychologist, Anna Mortimer, to Wombourne, Staffs. He measured all the cells in the police station where Molloy was interviewed. His letter to Howard, he tells the *Eye*, submitted entirely on his own initiative, is a summary of his findings. He says the evidence: "cumulatively and comprehensively questions" not just the reliability of the Staffs CID officers who interviewed Molloy, but also the performance of Baxter's team.

Shepherd's main point is that police officers told the judge and jury at the trial that Molloy had dictated his confession in his own words. They presented what Molloy said in the interviews running up to the confession in inverted commas — to indicate direct speech. Language experts now suggest in the strongest possible terms that these statements and the confession could not have been in Molloy's own words.

So the police changed tack. They now say they did not take the statements and confession down at the time — but made it up from "trigger notes" made by an officer who was sitting with a notebook outside the cell. These notes have never been produced and the officer who took them, DS John Robbins, could not give evidence at the Bridgewater trial because he was unwell.

Dr Shepherd makes the following points.

● If the police are right — that they did not take contemporaneous notes, and Molloy's confession was not in his own words — then they deliberately deceived the judge and jury, ie, they committed perjury.



***ANGRY LETTER:** Dr Eric Shepherd*

● The cells at Wombourne take more than four people without overcrowding — so why have a man outside the cell taking notes?

● Someone sitting outside a cell at Wombourne can hear what is going on inside only when one person is speaking at a time. It is impossible to hear what is said if two people speak at the same time or if there is any noise in the office or in the corridor.

● The "post hoc" explanation of the officers leads to the conclusion that they are unreliable, and that their shift in approach is "devious and disingenuous".

Dr Shepherd also expressed his concern that Baxter and the inquiry team did not show him the custody records at Wombourne police station for the days after Molloy was arrested. They show, again and again, that Molloy was in different places and doing different things while the officers claimed they were interviewing him. These discrepancies, Dr Shepherd now tells Michael Howard, further damage the police account of the confession. Moreover, the inquiry team's refusal to let him see the detention record was, he suggests, a breach of their moral duty.

His letter to Howard, he says, ends with a strong request that Baxter's team should be called to account for its investigative conduct and selective reporting, and that the case should be sent to the court of appeal.

This extraordinary, direct and unique approach to a home secretary from a distinguished scientist has been joined on Howard's desk by another in the long line of documents and new evidence submitted by the Molloy's family lawyer, Jim Nichol.

Nichol also concentrates on the Molloy confession. After careful analysis of the custody record, he reveals:

● No fewer than 14 interviews with Molloy by police officers in the days following his arrest were not disclosed to the trial or to the defence.

● Molloy was held in solitary confinement for 10 days after his arrest without being allowed access to a lawyer, friend or family.

● Even after he signed a confession to being at the farm with the other three men, he was not charged with the murder. He was charged instead on 11 December with a minor meat burglary at Tamworth.

● This burglary was not enough to ensure Molloy's continued imprisonment. He would almost certainly have got bail.

● His solicitor, a Mr Wiggal from Tamworth, was told on 15 December that his client had being charged with burglary and would appear at Wombourne magistrates court on 18 December at 10am.

● Wiggal's assistant duly attended the court at 10am only to find that the magistrates had met, specially, mysteriously and most exceptionally to deal with the Molloy case at 9am. Unrepresented, Molloy had been remanded in the cells.

● Molloy was allowed to see his solicitor in the cells on that day, when he angrily denied ever having been to Yew Tree Farm or having anything to do with the robbery or murder there.

● Even after that, police continued to interview Molloy without his solicitor. On one occasion, they waited until the solicitor's car had driven out of the police car park before rushing to the cells for another interview.

● On 28 December, 18 days after the confession and without a scrap of evidence to support it, the police finally charged Molloy with the murder.

Flexible Fostering

■ ***THE EYE*'s revelation that Sir Christopher Foster, economic director of Coopers, Lybrand & Deloitte, and new deputy chairman of Railtrack (consultants: Coopers Lybrand & Deloitte) was one of the main geniuses behind the poll tax obviously made a big impact at the philanthropic Joseph Rowntree Foundation.**

The *Eye* has been invited by the foundation to a glamorous Westminster reception on 14 March to celebrate a new report entitled *Alternatives to the Community Charge*.

There are refreshments from 12.45 to 1.30, and a lot of MPs will be boozing away. But the real attraction is the presentation of the findings from the report by three very important people from the accountancy firm which produced it (at the usual rate believed to be not a million pounds less than £300 an hour).

The name of the firm will not surprise you: Coopers Lybrand & Deloitte. Nor will the name of the best-known of the three presenters: Sir Christopher Foster.

Sadly the *Eye* will be unable to attend due to a sudden and severe pain in the stomach.

WILLIE WHITEOUT

■ **LONDON TRANSPORT had a wizard idea for celebrating the 30th anniversary of its White City training centre last October: it got Lord "Willie" Whitelaw to unveil a plaque.**

As a young parliamentary secretary to the minister of labour in 1963, Willie had opened the centre. So who better to remember the good old days and herald in the new than Old Oyster Eyes?

Ten weeks later LT announced that the magnificently modernised training centre was to close, and the land sold for a handsome price to a property speculator.

BRAER GRABBIT

FROM THE Southampton offices of the marine accident investigation branch of the department of transport comes another mighty bucket of whitewash, poured this time over the wreck of the tanker Braer on Shetland.

The three main policies of shipowners the world over are:

1. "Flagging out" ships to tiny, poor countries such as Liberia, which cannot possibly enforce their own shipping regulations.

2. Employing crews from anywhere in the world who will work in *dangerous* and tough conditions for a pittance, and often can't talk to each other.

3. Reducing all other considerations, even in times of shipwreck, to commercial advantage.

The Braer, registered in Liberia, was a case in point. Of the 34 men on board, the master was Greek, as was the chief engineer and the first assistant engineer. The superintendent was Pakistani. The four fitters were Poles. All the rest were Filipino.

The tanker's engines broke down (due to incompetent loading of steel pipes on deck — a matter not even investigated by the MAIB) at 4.40am on 5 January last year. She drifted on to the rocks on Shetland at 11.11 — six and a half hours later. How was it not possible in all that time to tow her to safety or anchor her?

At 5.26, 46 minutes after the engine stopped, the master telephoned the Shetland coastguard. The MAIB report mentions "language difficulties" in the conversation, part of which went like this:

Master: *I require only tugboat for towing, because we have not engine, we require the towing as soon as possible because we are laden condition, we have full load crude oil.*

Coastguard: *Do you wish us to contact the harbour authorities at Lerwick and ask them to provide a tug for your assistance?*

Master: *OK. Thank you very much.*

Coastguard: *Are your owners prepared to pay the commercial rate for the towage?*

Master: *I don't know, I don't know if you can make arrange for the tug because just now I haven't contacted with my owners.*

Nothing happened. At 5.48, the coastguard called again and asked if the master wanted a tow. In a confusing reply, the master said: "Tell me about the price of tugboat please, you er tell me about the price, over." The coastguard explained that he had nothing to do with the price of tugs. Eventually, six minutes later, he himself phoned the ship's owners, B&H in Stamford, USA. It was not until nine minutes past six, three quarters of an hour after the first call for a tug, that the owners agreed to pay for one — and not until five past seven, an hour and half after the first call, that the tug Star Sirius left Lerwick.

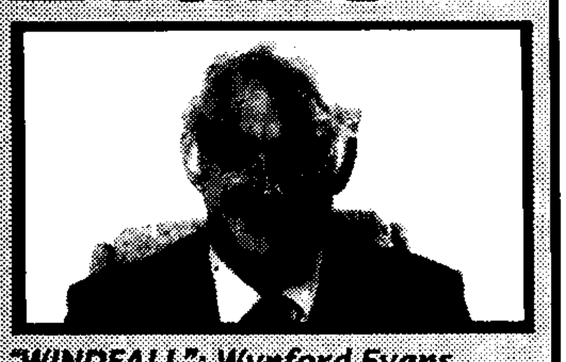
The tug got to the Braer just before she hit the rocks. Even so, there was time to shoot a line on board. If the call for a tug had been passed on at 5.30, the Star Sirius could have been with the tanker at 8.30, two hours 40 minutes before she grounded. Incredibly, the MAIB report concludes that if the tug had been called out when it should have been: "It is unlikely that the grounding would have been averted."

Similarly, though the report constantly mentions the language difficulties there was no reference to the lack of any common language training for emergencies. The department of transport itself approved (and dropped) a pilot proposal for such a training scheme four years ago.

The MAIB report makes no criticism of underpaid, multilingual crews, no criticism of flagging out, no criticism of anyone except the master who is blamed for not going out of the wheelhouse to inspect the dislodged pipes (in such a gale there is nothing he could have done about them anyway).

PS: On Unst island in North Shetland there is a huge early warning station, built to track the Russian attack which will never come. For a tiny fragment of the expense of this white elephant, a vessel traffic services (VTS) system could have been installed to provide a proper radar tracking system round Shetland. Shetland mariners have been demanding this for years, but the department of transport has not been able to afford it. No doubt for that reason, the absence of a VTS system in the area is not criticised — or even mentioned — in the MAIB's report.

Thank Evans



"WINDFALL": Wynford Evans

■ IT'S BONANZA time for the directors of electricity companies — and in South Wales they are making the most of it.

When South Wales Electricity was privatised, its chairman and senior directors voted themselves a bounty of luscious share options, which they could cash in after three years. The three years are up and chairman Wynford Evans has leapt to the trough — buying 111,510 shares at 278p each (the option price) and in the same day selling 25,000 of them at the going price of 723p, a net profit of £180,750.

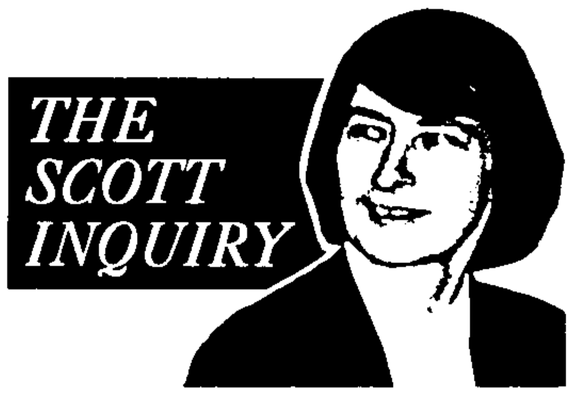
He still has the option to sell the other 86,510 of course (reaping at least half a million), and in case he runs out of options, the board gave him 52,500 new ones (at £4.51) last September and another 7,500 (at £5.22) in January. He can cash these in three years' time.

***PS:* When Mr Evans chaired the publicly-owned South Wales Electricity Board he had to make do on a pathetic salary: less than £50,000 a year. Last year he got £200,000 plus a "performance related bonus" of £30,000 ("related", perhaps, to the enormous rise in electricity sold by his company — 0.3 percent).**

***PPS:* Mr Evans is this year's chairman of the National Grid plc.**

***PPPS:* He is also deputy chairman of the Prince of Wales's committee for businessmen who care.**

Signed — but not Hurd



■ HERE IS a question for Lord Justice Scott to ask the next time a government minister comes before him at the Iraqgate inquiry: which ministers did *not* sign public interest immunity certificates (PIICs), whose main purpose is to prevent interesting information from reaching the public? Here are some answers:

DOUGLAS HURD: In June 1990, Mr Lorrain Osman who had been in prison on remand since 1983 applied for *habeas corpus*.

In the proceedings, Osman tried to get the British government to disclose the text of cables between British and Malaysian ministries about his case. He claimed they might shed some light on the close relationship between the Malaysian ruling party, UMNO, and the British government.

The foreign office moved at once to stop the disclosure of the documents. One PIIC certificate was signed in June 1990 by Francis Maude; another in February 1992 by Lord Caithness. Both were ministers of state. Somehow, the secretary of state, Douglas Hurd, kept himself aloof.

The same thing happened in September 1992 when FO civil servants cast around for someone to sign certificates suppressing documents with information vital to the defence of the directors of the Midlands machine tools firm, Matrix Churchill. Hurd somehow wasn't available, so two certificates were signed by Tristan Garel-Jones, minister of state.

Hurd told the Scott inquiry he had no idea of the content of the certificates signed by Garel-Jones.

RICHARD NEEDHAM: Not all secretaries of state have developed Hurd's knack of being unavailable at the right time. Three of Hurd's senior cabinet colleagues *did* sign: Kenneth Clarke QC; Malcolm Rifkind QC; and Michael Heseltine.

Rifkind and Heseltine seem to have been specially unlucky. Their ministers of state had been approached to sign the certificates. At the DTI, Richard Needham — like Douglas Hurd, well-versed in intelligence matters from his time in Northern Ireland — took one look at the certificate and handed it back, explaining that he had an urgent appointment for luncheon. The wretched Heseltine had no such appointment and signed "with the greatest reluctance".

JONATHAN AITKEN: Something strangely similar happened at the ministry of defence where Jonathan Aitken, a former arms company director and PR man for the Saudi dynasty, was asked to sign another Matrix Churchill certificate. He annotated his copy with a few mild questions and never saw the document again. It went all the way up to Rifkind, who signed with his peculiarly enigmatic smile.

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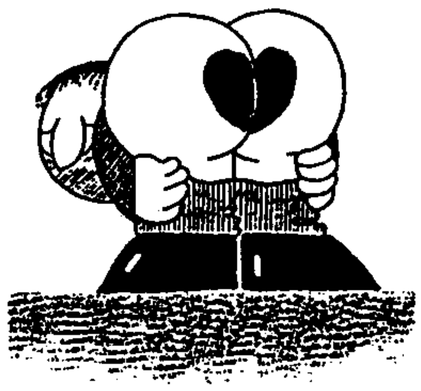

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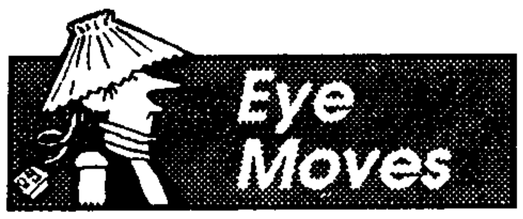

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SUCCESSFUL, WITTY, presentable professional, 44, fancies role as sugar daddy to lively, luscious, libidinous, leggy lady, 18-30. Include photo to guarantee reply. Box 3139.

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I'M AN attractive 40s woman, warm, sensual, unattached, creative. Are you my male counterpart? If so, would love to hear from you. Photo please. Nottingham based. Box 3339.

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HAVE FANTASY will travel. Female extrovert needed with flashing smile. Box 3839.

SINGLE, ATTRACTIVE, bearded professional male, 32, seeks devastatingly intelligent, independent and attractive woman with gsoh ono. Photo appreciated. Box 3939.

LADY, slim, youthful, 40-60, sought by similar professional man, 55, for discreet lunches and afternoon fun. Surrey/ Kent/ Sussex/ South London. Box 5039.

COMPANY DIRECTOR seeks lady for laughter and companionship. Must be elegant, modern and enjoy the nicer things of life. Age preferred 30s. Photo not essential but appreciated. Box 5139.

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RUGGEDLY HANDSOME professional male, 34, enjoys skiing, rugby, flying and travel, seeks assertive, silk-loving adventuress to share and broaden horizons. Box 3639.

TALL SLIM graduate male lonelyheart (27), likes theatre, eating out and being active, seeks caring intelligent female (20-35) for companionship and laughs. London. Box 3739.

ECLECTIC HACK, blond, slim, late 30s, needs clever, artistic, leggy male, 30s/40s. Hot on expressive, but not corporate, powers? Succulent, sweet and sophisticated? Box 4739.

PROFESSIONAL MALE, 50s, solvent, seeks small, slim n/s female, 30s/40s, companion on all expenses paid motoring holiday Europe. 4/6 weeks April/May. Gsoh essential, position could become permanent. Box 4839.

TALL PROFESSIONAL attached gent, 32, requires similar gentess, age/colour unimportant, for occasional discreet long slow work-outs, Northants. Box 4939.

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❤ CHICKEN — HOORHA! Love from BEAN.

❤ WOOF WOOF — love you forever. SNUGS.

❤ TO KEITH — "Why not?" — CM.

❤ MY DEE glasses heart point — love Big George.

❤ VICTORIA H. — Your cat is mad and dangerous. You're not much better.

❤ TO CANDICE-MARIE — "I'm tired." — KEITH PRATT.

❤ PARIS CHICK — je t'aime — GLOUCESTER GUY.

❤ CHRISTINA M. — Mmmmmmmm.

❤ J.K. — my B.H.B.F.H. — love M.P.W.

❤ LAUREL AND HARDY LIVE. Bravo, mille fois.

❤ RUTH V. — Belgravia for tea?

❤ JENNIE — who always walks in beauty — Forget the rest, my heart is true. EURIPIDES TROUSERS.

❤ SCRUMPTIOUS — I want to ravish you with huge green chillies and crunchy peanut butter. HANDSOME.

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❤ I NEVER DID finden those Knaben, I never did kommen Dir weg; And there's Zeit still for all wir vorhaben, Since we're beide officialy jeck!

❤ P — YOUR BREATH touched my face and your smile entered my heart.

❤ TO XJS from MGB — I love you very much and I'll never leave you.

❤ JUSTIN — can we share you? From K and S.

❤ DINXS — meet me for forever soon — B.

❤ CHICKEN — I KNOW you love me! SNAPPERHEAD.

❤ CAPITAINE — no secrets between us, our love is glass. Yours Forever — SOUS-FIFRE.

❤ ISLAND LOVER — gentle dream treader — hold my eyes always. Mm.

❤ MCiLMUFFIN — love you so very much — NEIL.

❤ BEANIE — love you first, last and always, body and soul. YOUR BEANIE.

❤ PUGGLE - I love you dearly. All my love forever. BE MINE.

❤ BECKSY — we'll be your keepers. Love you. LAMBKIN, CATBOY and TED XXX.

❤ TO THE SUBLIME and Impish L.I.R. — Beach hut booked on South Salmon Island. Bring suitcase full of worries to throw over cliff. No need for Mills or Boon as island private and deserted. Coming? From the UTTERLY RIDICULOUS.

❤ JEZEBEL — Lucifer is lost without you. Big bamboo on offer — no dowery required. Just be MY VALENTINE.

❤ L.D. — seven or thirteen strings — it's still craziness.

❤ MUNDANE — Happy Hollidays. Love always. MRS MUNDANE.

❤ BEANNIE — ditto. BAGPUSS.

❤ ICE CREAM for Goose? Yes — in 188 flavours!

❤ CAERDYDD CLODEY — love you always. MAD PATRICK.

❤ SWEET PEA — I love you. SPRICKET.

❤ MY DEB — SORRY! With all my love — J.

❤ ELAINE — nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands. Love DAVID.

❤ HELLO DIANE DOLL — Love you all the world, by the way. TJM.

❤ HELEN — forget the sheep. I got ewe babe! ALAN.

❤ SWART — Please be mine you Herbaceous Harridan. COATES.

❤ BED IS BEAUTIFUL; proximity is precious; remember? Let's do something 'nocuous' for a change!

❤ PGC — Darüber sollst Du sicher sein.

❤ BLATANTLY BORING Bugsy Bedazzled By Beautiful *Barnton Belle*.

❤ WINNIT loves Minky Womman and two sweeties in Viking shed — Many kisses XXXX.

❤ I STILL LOVE Mrs Read.

❤ S, JT (two, five) — IPSWICH-SPEAK.

❤ HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY heartless bastard — much love foul-mouthed DRUNKEN SLUT.

❤ CHASTITY — You're all I think of. Hugs'n'stuff. SENSEI.

❤ FRANK — my private eye is on your private parts, OH VALENTINE.

❤ ROY — Beaker loves you. SCREAM!

❤ TO CANDICE-MARIE — "No." — KEITH PRATT.

❤ YOGOURT — 42, yearning 4 U. DUNBAR MERMAID.

❤ LUCY — I think one should love until one dies, what? I love you — SIMON XXX.

❤ HDILT? — infinitely your Harley is right up my street. I wish it were.

❤ JUICY JO — intoxicate me with your succulent lips. RAMPENT.

❤ MRS M. — loves CAPN. P.

❤ WEENIE — thank you for the twig — love PONKY.

❤ TO STEVE MORRIS — I love you more than words can tell. And it's all your fault for being so cute! SUSIE — XXXXX.

❤ ROLYPOLY LADY — Well, you sat on me after all. Still love you madly, truly, deeply. SQUASHED R.

❤ MARTIN — love you always — DOLL.

❤ C.B. — to pain, to torture — tonight! A.C.H.

❤ MISSIE — I'm still utterly bonkers. Love, BIG ONE.

❤ JAMIE — love you lots — KITTEN!

❤ HELLO TO REINDEER! Hello to him! I love you. Always — YOUR PIGLET.

❤ ADE THE POET — love you. TIMI

❤ FROM PUTY FACE to Angel-shark: "It's time to get up" and I love you.

❤ "H" — Roses are red, violets are blue, I cum in my pants thinking of you. TIMSY.

❤ FRONT ROW FIEND sends everlasting love to his pouting princess from the principality. Your valleys are my delight.

❤ MIN: I LOVE YOU LOTS — Diva 9 3. STAN XXX

❤ EMMA — please come back. Strasbourg loves you.

❤ LINDEN — thank you for coming. I'll love you forever. DAVID

❤ DARLING — love is like a five year lease. It improves with every renewal. Let's "renewal" tonight!

❤ LEEDS TIGER — love you — Tx.

❤ ROSALIE — I love you. I know we can make it. RG/LF?

❤ TO SUE and her imaginary suspenders — with love from your NUMBER ONE FAN.

❤ GLAUCIA CALP — lovely São Paulo lady.

❤ Je t'aime — MR E.C.

❤ BIG BAD SHEEP loves Gopher in Wolfette's clothing.

❤ BEBE — moi t'aime plus que toi! TA VALOU.

❤ MARTIN BUNNY — My beloved burrowing, gregarious, herbivorous mammal — PAMPLE LOVES YOU.

❤ LOVE to Marti and Thomas too.

❤ NICOLA B. — after 30 you're free! And it's Friday for me.

❤ OH YOU LADY — this man has come to love the wonder of your bed — but two years on (he's rather dumb) believes true wonder's in your head.

❤ RUMPELSTILTSKIN — I.L.Y — Infinitely poodles, BAGEL XXX.

❤ KIM, Amanda, Marta and Dean — we think you are purrfect.

❤ TONYA P. — Is it B.R. or me?

❤ UNTITLED LADY — drawn to paint, although ST, perhaps no saint?

❤ NIGEGUY — loves Valpolicella even biggertime.

❤ ANTHONY WILSON — mmmmm, we just love your bananas.

❤ GILL BRIDGE — Is Blackpool F.C. tub worth it?

❤ SALLY — to have said I love you once may have been misfortune, does this constitute carelessness? And could you still love me if my name was not EARNEST ?

❤ TABATHA T. — you can always spank me!

❤ FLIPPER — may your snowball always be pink.

❤ CHRIS WILSON — I love you. MICHAEL TEHERAHOA RYAN.

❤ POPPET — some serious pollination please — PETAL.

❤ TO LORD GNOME'S PRINTER — keep bashng fascists. Love Always, your partner in court.

❤ BRIDE OF CHRIST — Deliver!

❤ SQUEAKY — Happy Anniversary! All my love — MONKY.

❤ ROGER — love you always — Forget-me-not. S.

❤ PETER C.F. Yours is coming. Bend over.

❤ DEAREST CRIME — whoof whoof. Love PAMMY XXX.

❤ O.A.R. — Can you still shag at tea?

❤ ME AND MY HAMPSTER — wuv you wats on wats.

❤ SARAH WEST — does it best.

❤ CLARE — don't fight it, feel it.

❤ JAMES NASH — A perfect Gentleman. Love PAM XXX.

❤ SHUT THAT DOOR LOSTY. Hearts and kisses — H.

❤ JULIA GOBERT — Do you still?

❤ D.L.N. — Adore you more in 94. RABBI.

❤ TO KEITH PRATT — "Kiss Pwudence" — Candice-Marie XXX

❤ COTTON GUSETT — bushy loves you.

❤ CLAIRE P. — My meat is sweet!

❤ BOD — the invisible man loves you — and promises to be more visible.

❤ NURSE PURSE — smouldering Stockport surgeon loves his SULTRY SAXMUNDHAM SIREN. PMT included. SUPERDOC.

❤ ANTONIA D. — It's novocaine or me!

❤ TO MY POOGHAR — with much love — THE COOGAN KING.

❤ LOLL — thanks for the last four years. Here's to the next 40. I love you — CHESTER XXX.

❤ CELIA, William, Martha and Johnny. Who loves you best? ME!

❤ CASS MAC C — are you as "Cludo'd" as you think you are?

❤ EMERIC MOLNAR — crazy name, crazy guy — don't chajus'luv him!

❤ DUBLIN — loving you from LAGOS

❤ BIG NOSE: Your tumultuousness overwhelms me. Or something.

❤ JH — love your lists. Yours always — NJ.

❤ MATTHEW DUFFY — I Love You.

❤ OLD WRINKLY — MJ loves you always.

❤ I LOVE your apple strudel — JEAN LE CHENE.

❤ JENNI — you broke my heart. Only you can put it together.

❤ SARAH — love you lots — NUBBY.

❤ MERYL THE MUNCHKIN — Lasalle and his pipe miss you but I love you — MURAT.

❤ B.T. (The Armenian Airhead) why don't you phone more often? — P.J.

❤ WHO NEEDS A GREENHOUSE when your relationship is a hothouse of desire? FB.

❤ TO SUE THE FISHWIFE from Frank the Fish — love me tender (and me engine too).

❤ HAPPY 14th ANNIVERSARY to D. Broughtons.

❤ OOLIE WOOLIE — lubby you — FURFY BEAR.

❤ LOVE YOU Pie Pop — WINSTON.

❤ LAMBCAKE — Bluey sends squeezy hugs until bestest girly goes OOO!

❤ CLARKE KENT VALENTINE — Belle du Jour waiting for you. LOVE.

❤ WILL THE FOUR-POSTER move to the kitchen this year or next year — or shall we just make do with France?

❤ YOSIE SWEETIE!

❤ THANKS for the apple blossom — SHTEM.

❤ ROGER — I love you — SPOT.

❤ RATTY — make my drey. SQUIRREL.

❤ PRECIOUS SALBOE — love you, always — daft sod.

❤ MIAOW, purr purr! Shall we play piggy doggy or frisky puppy tonight, my flopsy bunny-wunnykins?

❤ MY DARLING CP — there is no doubt, when we are alone I moan and shout — be my Valentine — or I'll sulk and pout, as you're the only man to wear me out.

❤ WUB wub wub wub wub wub wub wub wub wub wub wub wub.

❤ BAILEY — I love you — Happy Valentines. ANNETTE.

❤ MARKO — The female loves you!!!

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MALE, 52, SLIM, London, smoker, likes food, wine and music, seeks buxom lady who gets a buzz from looking slightly trashy. Ring 0660 206665

ARTICULATE, SENSITIVE, sensual, non smoking man, seeks somewhat similar, bright, outstanding, youthful female, to explore together mutual cerebral stimulation and pleasure. Ring 0660 209504

MR NICE GUY, 33, 6ft 2in, green eyes, honest and sensitive, adores fun, music and kids, seeks affectionate, sensitive women to share life's wonders. Ring 0660 209730

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ATTRACTIVE BLONDE FEMALE, 32, green eyes, caring, loving, honest, romantic, likes music and travel. Seeks caring man 30/45 for lasting relationship. Ring 0660 209607

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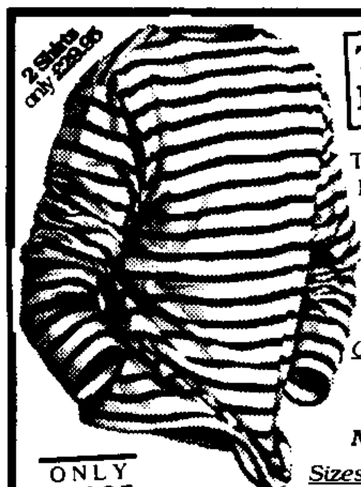

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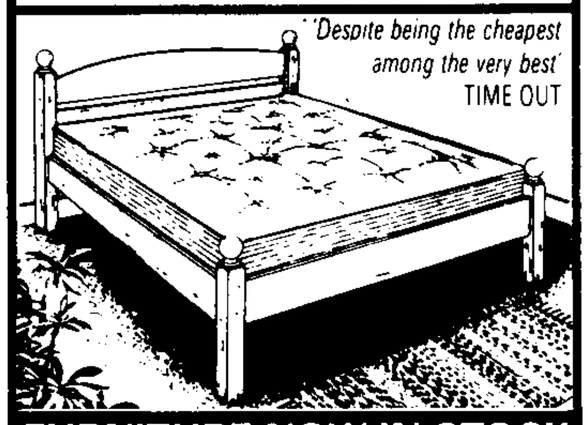

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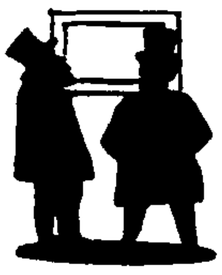

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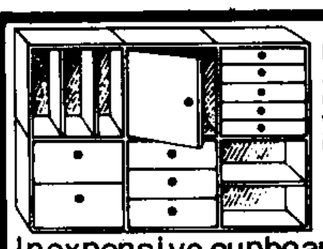

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